

Condemned Pasts

A Topography of Memory from Le Nuove Prison, Turin

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This thesis focuses on the cultural memory of *Le Nuove*, a building that served as Turin's main prison from 1870 until 1987, and was closed in 2004. By analysing stories which emerge from oral history, from archives, and from material traces in the building, the project considers the significance of *Le Nuove* for the city of Turin and how prison memory may contribute to broader Italian history. The thesis addresses the forms these stories take, the larger myths and assumptions that they imply, and how they are used by social actors to further a particular vision of the past, for active use in the present.

The thesis follows the topography of the prison, locating each chapter in a particular physical site. Chapter I (on the gate) discusses the physical and temporal permeability of the building. Chapter II (on the cell) focuses on prisoner memories of the physicality of the prison experience. Chapter III (on the roof) focuses on the memory of three prison riots. Chapter IV (on the turrets) focuses on violence, guards and silences, and on the narratives surrounding the killings of two prison guards in the 1970s. Chapter V (on the church) considers the changing role of the church in prison and its myths. Chapter VI (on the tour) focuses on the work of the organization *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola* and describes how this group attempts to make the past present into the building today. Broader problems involved in transforming prisons into heritage, and the use of suffering as an argument for cultural heritage, are also considered. Chapter VII (on the outer walls) closes the thesis with reflections on the dangerous meanings still projected onto the prison even in its transitional state as a ruin in the city.

To my parents & Raimondo

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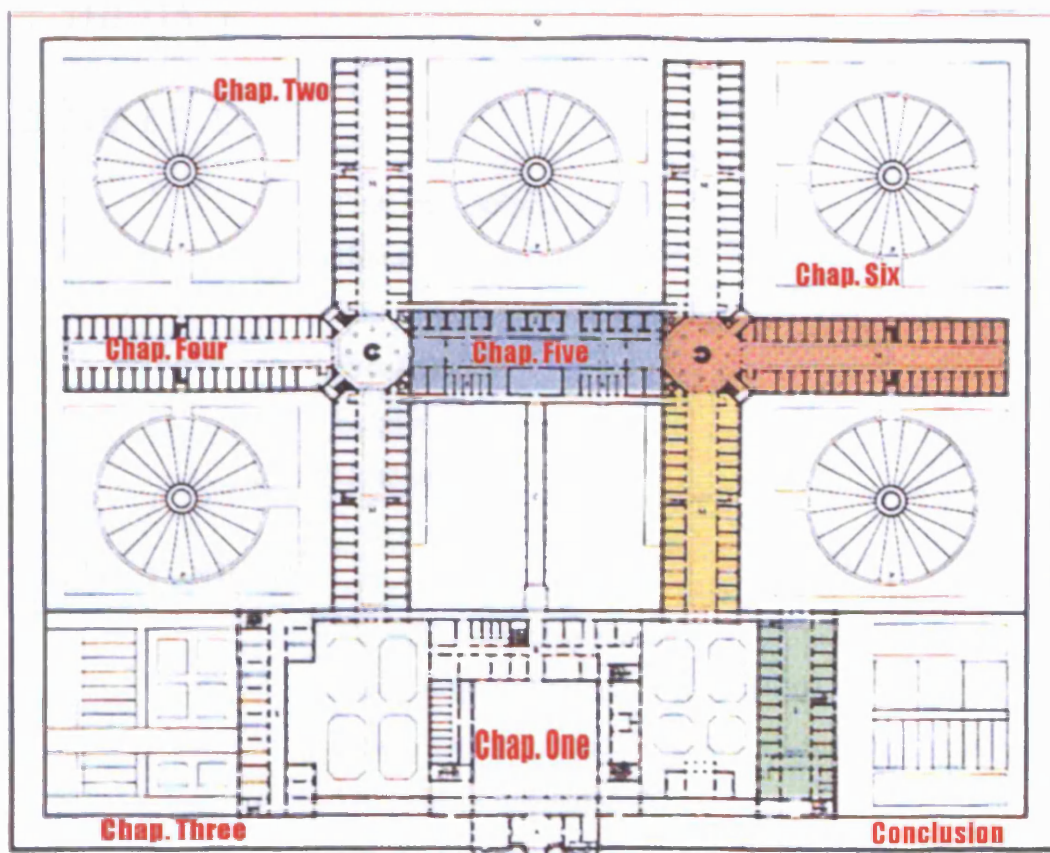


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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The walls of the dark brick building that served as the prison known as ‘Le Nuove’¹ stretch for several blocks along Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, one of Turin’s most central boulevards. The ex-prison is nestled between the new international bus terminal and the small street named after Paolo Borsellino (the anti-mafia judge assassinated in 1992), across the street from the new courthouse. The building is thus caught between two conflicting plans for the area: one concerned with expanding and redeveloping the entire neighbourhood surrounding the prison; another concerned with establishing a symbolic/memorial space around the new courthouse named after Bruno Caccia, a Turin judge killed by the camorra.² At the core of these two plans is the question of what the old prison stands for, whom it represents and of what use it can be to the city of Turin today.

My project is concerned with the cultural memory of prison, within the specific context of the city of Turin. By cultural memory I mean: ‘the field of cultural negotiation through which different stories vie for a place in history’,³ to use Marita Sturken’s definition. ‘Stories’ emerge from oral history, from the prison archives, from newspapers and from the material traces left in the building itself. This project addresses the forms that these stories take, the larger myths⁴ and assumptions that they imply, and how they are used by different social actors to further a particular vision of the past, for active use in the present.

Despite the popularity and influence of Michel Foucault’s seminal work *Discipline and Punish*⁵ prisons have been a subject largely neglected by anthropologists⁶ and cultural historians.⁷ Their study tends to be relegated to the fields of criminology, sociology and public policy and these fields are rarely concerned with memory and representation.

¹ From now on referred to without quotation marks throughout the text.

² The camorra is an organized criminal organization with roots in Naples, similar to the mafia. Bruno Caccia was shot outside his house in Turin in 1982.

³ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories. The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997.

⁴ I refer to myths in the broad definition used in the edited volume by Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (eds.), *The Myths We Live By*, Routledge, London, 1990.

⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, Alan Sheridan (trans.) Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1991

⁶ There are of course exceptions such as Adam Reed’s recent work *Papua New Guinea’s Last Place: Experiences of Constraint in a Postcolonial Prison*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2003.

⁷ An exception should be made for the fairly numerous studies of prisons in the early modern period and in the transition to the modern penitentiary, a time frame that is not, however, relevant to my study.

Though some histories of individual prisons exist, they tend to come from the Anglo-American context and to focus on earlier time periods.⁸ They are also generally more concerned with prison reforms/reformers than with the experiences of individual inmates. Prison memoirs make up for that omission and consist of a quite varied and lively body of literature.⁹ A book by Charles Klopp,¹⁰ focusing on the writing of Italian political prisoners from the Renaissance to the 1970s, is the only recent study, which looks on the Italian prison experience in a long perspective from a cultural point of view.

Melossi and Pavarini's book, *The Prison and the Factory*,¹¹ is the most cited work on Italian prisons. Like the works of Michel Foucault and Michael Ignatieff¹² in the French and English contexts, however, it is concerned with the general issues surrounding the birth of the prison, its structures, and the reforms that shaped it. Few works focus on individuals and their relationship to the institution of prison, and the particularities of a specific historical locality are rarely taken into account.

For its focus on a single Italian prison in its physical and symbolic manifestations, for the varied sources it analyses, and the interdisciplinary nature of the theories it engages, this project will constitute a new approach to the study of prison in general, to the writing of Italian prison history in particular, and to the treatment of space and material culture in relation to cultural memory.

Most studies focusing on prisons tend to treat prisons as isolated from the outside world and to see them as monolithic entities somehow removed from history

⁸ To give just a few examples see: Negley K Teeters, *The Cradle of the Penitentiary: the Walnut Street jail 1773-1835*, Pennsylvania Prison Society, Philadelphia, 1955; Roy King and Kenneth Elliott, *Albany: birth of a prison-end of an era*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1977; Philip Gura, *Buried from the World: Inside the Massachusetts State Prison 1829-1831*, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, 2001; Michael Meranze, *Laboratories of virtue: punishment, revolution, and authority in Philadelphia, 1760-1835*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1996.

⁹ See for example the famous *Autobiography of Malcolm X: With the Assistance of Alex Haley*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1968; or from the Italian context Laura Braghetta and Francesca Mambro, *Nel cerchio della prigionia*, Sperling & Kupfer Editori, Milan, 1995; Francesco Lattanzi, *Quando si finisce in carcere. Appunti di un agente di custodia*, Cittadella, Assisi, 1982; Memoirs in the form of gathered letters are the most common form that prison memoirs take in the Italian context, see for example: Sandro Pertini, *Sei condanne, due evasioni*, Arnoldo Mondadori, Milan, 1982 or Ernesto Rossi, *Elogio della galera. Lettere 1930-1943*, Laterza, Bari, 1968. And, of course, Antonio Gramsci, *Lettere dal Carcere*, Einaudi, Turin, 1947.

¹⁰ Charles Klopp, *Sentences: The Memoirs and Letters of Italian Political Prisoners from Benvenuto Cellini to Aldo Moro*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1999.

¹¹ Dario Melossi and Massimo Pavarini, *The Prison and the Factory. Origins of the Penitentiary System*, Glynis Cousin (trans.) MacMillan Press, London and Basingstoke, 1981.

¹² Michael Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain: The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850*, Penguin Books, Bungay, Suffolk, 1978.

and impervious to change.¹³ This project will challenge these three assumptions, implicit in most of the literature on prisons. I will argue that prisons are permeable spaces, that they are far from monolithic but are continuously transformed by those who inhabit them at any given time, and that prison history is deeply interconnected with the broader history outside. To draw out prison memory then, is not just to examine the representations of a little microcosm onto itself, but it is a new way of looking at the city, at social change, and at broader struggles over the interpretation and telling of history.

My thesis is based on research I conducted in the State Archive in Turin, in the archive of Padre Ruggero Cipolla¹⁴ (who served as the prison chaplain from 1944 to 1994), as well as on an extensive collection of local and national newspapers found in the Civic Library and in the Historical Archive of the City of Turin. I also consulted personal letters, film footage, photographs and materials given to me by my informants. Most importantly, the thesis focuses on oral testimony and on the material traces found inside the prison.

I have conducted forty-five qualitative interviews with people whose names appeared in the archives or in newspaper articles related to the prison, or whom I heard of through today's prison authorities, or from the organization running the guided tours of the prison. For convenience they can be divided into the following rough categories:

- Common prisoners
- Political prisoners from the Second World War
- Political prisoners from the period between 1969 and 1984.
- Prison guards
- Prison directors
- Family members of prisoners
- Family members of guards
- Volunteers from both lay and religious organizations
- The prison chaplain and the prison psychologist
- Prison administrators
- 'Victims' of prison events: i.e. the mother of policeman Salvatore Lanza, shot by the terrorist organization *Prima Linea*¹⁵, while patrolling the prison; a colleague of the assassinated policeman who

¹³ One good exception can be found in the work of Massimo Pavarini, as for example in his 'La città e il suo rovescio: note in tema di carcere e metropoli' in *La Nuova Città. Carcere e Città*. Quaderni della Fondazione Michelucci. 1983. Where he does connect prisons to historical changes outside, though in Italy in general.

¹⁴ In the Convent of S. Bernardino of Siena in Saluzzo (CN)

¹⁵ See appendix 1.

was supposed to be in service in his place; the prison doctor shot in the legs by the Squadre Armate Proletarie¹⁶

- Teachers and lawyers
- Visitors to the prison tour today
- ‘Outsiders’ such as a woman who wrote to a *Le Nuove* inmate, from her small village in Calabria, for almost ten years, having found his address in the magazine ‘Confidenza.’

Interviews were conducted following a loose pattern of questions and allowing ample space for informants to choose the content and the form of their narrations. Although I was certainly interested in finding out about particular key events such as prison riots or about their daily routine inside the prison, the interviews were designed to assess the forms that prison memory takes, the common patterns that emerge from different prison narratives, and how they may connect to broader questions of cultural memory.

Transcripts in Italian of all the interviews are available upon request but they have not been included in the thesis for practical reasons. With the exception of those informants who asked to remain anonymous, all informants appear in this text under their real names except for in passages whose subject matter is still too delicate to discuss, in which case names have been replaced by fake initials. This choice follows the practices of oral history adopted by scholars such as Alessandro Portelli.

A great part of the sources analysed in this work are oral sources, which have been altered from their original oral/interactive form to a written form, which has furthermore been cut and re-arranged thematically. To make up for this alteration I have tried at times to include a description of my interactions with the informant during interviews, and to make the reader conscious of my presence as author and thus also editor and actor in these stories. In this respect the thesis could be seen to adopt a methodology commonly used in what is known as ‘reflexive anthropology’. According to Kirsten Hastrup, in reflexive anthropology ‘the fragments of life are connected through reflections of the experiential space of the ethnographer’. She explains that as place is replaced by space, which is but ‘practiced place’ (in De Certeau’s term):¹⁷

¹⁶ See appendix 1.

¹⁷ Michel, De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Steven Rendall (trans.), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984, p.117.

The notion of context itself cannot be formally defined, but must be evoked through analytical practice. The practiced place of necessity incorporates the ethnographer; in an important sense she herself is the ritual context-maker. She does not construct reality, even if it is never uncontaminated by her knowledge interest. She is part of the defining consciousness of the space.¹⁸

Reflexive anthropology is not supposed to be a self-indulgent and self-centered exercise but rather to openly acknowledge the processes of selection and of subject construction which are intrinsic to fieldwork. I have adopted the practice of placing myself within the text to help define the spaces addressed by the thesis and to highlight oral/physical interactions, which could not have been conveyed otherwise (see for example the section on the ex-prison guard's club in Chapter Three).

There has been another significant alteration to the oral sources for the purposes of this thesis: translation. All translations, unless stated otherwise, are my own. I have tried to translate Italian expressions into their English equivalent as closely as possible, giving precedence to meaning over form in most cases. Where word choice seemed particularly important or impossible to translate satisfactorily, I have included the Italian text together with the English.

'Prison memory' is difficult to assess due to the power imbalance between prisoners and institutional authorities (which accounts for an imbalance in storytelling, since the authorities are also those who hold the pen that writes the archives), to the shame involved for some in narrating their own incarceration, and to the veil of *omertà*,¹⁹ which shrouds so many prison events. Oral history and material culture provide useful tools and methods for drawing out prison events and their meaning through the weaving together of complex narratives and traces produced by different social actors. Both methodologies actively engage with the silences and gaps that emerge from any inquiry into the past, and can thus help read through the strongest voices and traces to find the more subdued narratives and traces that would otherwise go unexamined by traditional history or anthropology.

¹⁸ Kirsten Hastrup, *A Passage to Anthropology: Between Experience and Theory*, Routledge, London, 1995.

¹⁹ Complicated Italian concept of silence in the face of authorities, usually associated with mafia events but which also applies to prison silences.

ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORY: The Physical Shape of Le Nuove over Time

The thesis aims at drawing a connection between the cultural memory surrounding Le Nuove and the physical space representing the prison today. I should therefore briefly introduce the prison building and some of the physical changes it has undergone over time.

The name Le Nuove-the new ones- referred colloquially to ‘le nuove carceri’ (the new prisons) and it was never changed, even though by the twentieth century the term came to have an ironic ring to it, since the building it referred to looked far from new, and was often described as ‘fatiscente’.²⁰ In the words of Teodoro Romano, a prison guard who worked in Le Nuove in the early 1970s: ‘so I went to Le Nuove in Turin. Le Nuove I thought were going to be new...oh please! I arrived and everything was ‘fatiscente’ (run down) ...I was a bit shocked (...)’.

In the original design from 1862, Le Nuove was to reflect the latest, and most advanced trends in prison architecture²¹ and it was to be the most important prison in the new kingdom of Italy, the prison for the capital.²² In actual fact it was built according to the Pentonville model, ‘refined by Sir Joshua Jebb at Pentonville in 1842- the most copied prison in the world, dominating 19th Century global prison design’²³ and its architectural structure incorporated the principles of total isolation and panoptical observation typical of the Philadelphia model which had already, by the mid 1860s, been proven to be obsolete and to cause severe psychiatric problems in inmates. By the time it was opened in 1870, the city of Turin had lost its capital

²⁰ The term means ‘run-down’ but is stronger, something between ‘decaying’ and ‘being obsolete’. It recurred in the interviews with inmates Mauro Salmoira and N.L.B., with the defence lawyer Aldo Perla and with the prison guard Salvatore Romano.

²¹ For an historical analysis and debate over the rise of these various forms of incarceration see: Michael Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain. The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850*, Penguin Books, Bungay, Suffolk, 1978; or Pieter Spierenburg, ‘The emergence of carceral institutions: prisons, galleys and lunatic asylums 1550-1900’ *Centrum voor Maatschappij Geschiedenis*, vol. 12, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, 1984. See also David Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social order and Disorder in the New Republic*, Little Brown, Boston Massachusetts, 1971, Chapter 4. For more specific information on the Philadelphia model of incarceration and its history see Michael Meranze, *Laboratories of Virtue- Punishment, Revolution, and Authority in Philadelphia, 1760-1835*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1996.

²² For a very thorough collection of the documents relating to the construction of Le Nuove, in the forms of architectural plans, meeting minutes as well as property documents and royal edicts see: Vera Comoli-Mandracci, *Il carcere per la società di sette-ottocento – il carcere giudiziario di Torino detto “le Nuove”*, Centro Studi Piemontesi, Turin, 1974.

²³ John Gold and George Revill (eds.) *Landscapes of Defence*, Prentice Hall, Harlow, 2000, p.240.

status and Le Nuove only fully regained national fame over a hundred years later, when it hosted the Red Brigades during their first trial, in 1976 and 1978.

Though it is a well-preserved example of a prison building in the Pentonville style, and though the architect Polani made some changes which architectural historians could be intrigued by,²⁴ the building does not in itself call out to be land marked. From the outside it looks mostly like a run-down old fortress with surprisingly low walls.

Beyond the walls and turrets, the prison is made up of a main courtyard and corridor; a central chapel building; small courtyard sections where prisoners were allowed out for air; and two observation rotundas from which three 'arms' (long corridors of cells) stretch out on each side. There are fifteen basement cells below each wing, which were used for solitary confinement and other forms of punishment.²⁵ During the Second World War, sixty-one condemned men were held there by the Nazi and Fascist forces before being executed.²⁶

In the late 1960s modern toilets and heating facilities were introduced. Salvatore Spatafora, a prison guard during the transition, remembered that before the changes:

It was dreadful, dreadful because I remember perfectly well that there in the cells they didn't have proper toilets or water, there were just some metal containers made of aluminium and they did their business in there and the other container was filled with water to wash yourself a bit but I won't tell you the lovely scent that was there! It was terrible so then little by little they changed things, they put in toilets, running water, when I got there in 1968 there was already electricity though. They put all the comforts after that.

While Spatafora was horrified at the conditions he found in prison his account also conveys the sense that later inmates were given everything 'all the comforts,' a story

²⁴ Mostly relating to ventilation and plumbing but also in the construction of the chapel which ensured that total isolation could be maintained during mass.

²⁵ I will discuss the 'letti di contenzione' in Chapter Two. They were confinement beds where prisoners would be strapped and kept naked, unable to move, for several days with only a hole in the bed into which they had to urinate and defecate, used well into the late 1970s.

²⁶ This number only includes the confirmed deaths of known prisoners from the Turin area, but according to the Anfim, the Associazione Italiana Famiglie Italiane Martiri Caduti per la Libertà della Patria (Italian Association for the Families of Italian Martyrs Fallen for the Freedom of the Homeland) there were other people condemned to death although neither their names nor their exact number are known. See Anfim: Geografia del Dolore, <http://www.anfim.it/wai/rapprestrecc.htm>, (visited 21 October 2005).

that taps into a recurrent myth of the prison being like a hotel, and prisoners spoiled.²⁷

The prison chaplain, Padre Ruggero Cipolla, introduced several changes of note. The most dramatic included the restoration of the prison chapel in 1955,²⁸ the construction of classrooms for the school programs that began in 1948,²⁹ of a full sized cinema in 1962,³⁰ and of a professional football field in 1965.³¹ The inauguration of the football field came to be legendary since the head of the Convent of S. Antonio and a federal referee landed on the new field with a helicopter and blessed it, in the presence of the minister of justice and all the inmates.

After the riots of the spring of 1969 and 1971 two wings were completely destroyed and the panoptical structure of the men's section of the prison had to be interrupted by ceilings, in order to make it harder for prisoners to take control of a section in the future. The prison guard Teodoro Romano remembered:

Then in 1971 there was a rebellion, and I wasn't there. There were two rebellions '69 and '71 always on the Monday after Easter. I was at the accounting office then at the end of midday I went out. Everything normal, all calm and relaxed. And then the next day I go to work and I see a newspaper, *La Stampa*, that says 'Le Nuove destroyed' and I was convinced they were talking about the previous rebellion, I thought maybe they are talking about it because it was an anniversary. But then I say: 'I wonder if they are talking about it again, I wonder what might have happened'. So then I go to *Le Nuove* and there was nothing there. No inmates. Nothing. Everything had already been transferred to a different prison, so there was nobody left.

At the time of the first trials of the Red Brigades in Turin, in 1976, a special net was placed over the courtyard where members of the Red Brigades took their walks, to ensure that they couldn't be taken away by other terrorists via a helicopter.³²

When it was still used as a prison *Le Nuove* was a place of mystery and fear. Carriages, and then cars, were not allowed to stop in front of its gate. During riots,

²⁷ See, to give just one example, Luigi Vismara, 'Prigioni: manca tutto (anche il senso di colpa)', *Il Giorno*, 2 July 1976.

²⁸ *L'Osservatore Romano*, n.173, July 28 1955 announces the inauguration of the newly restored chapel.

²⁹ Secondo Ercole, *Padre Ruggero ieri e oggi*, Grafica Nizza, Collegno (To), 2001, p.24.

³⁰ Maria Grazia Imarisio, Diego Surace and Marica Marcellino, *Una città al cinema- Cent'anni di sale cinematografiche a Torino 1895-1995*, Edizioni Neos, Turin p. 254.

³¹ Secondo Ercole, *Padre Ruggero ieri e oggi*, *ibid.* p.38. Based on report held in Archivio Storico di Padre Ruggero Cipolla, Convento di S. Bernardino da Siena, Saluzzo, folder 12 bis.

³² Oral testimony, Maria Tagliente, tour guide in *Le Nuove* and Vincenzo Cappelletto, teacher in *Le Nuove*. The fantasy of the terrorists being lifted away on a helicopter is reminiscent of Mussolini's airlift escape from Gran Sasso.

guards, administrators, journalists, relatives and onlookers would form an indistinct crowd staring up at masked prisoners on the roof, and at the smoke rising up behind them. Inevitably, a mobile squad would pierce through the main gate like an invading army, with teargas, sticks, and helmets. For one hundred and thirty three years the prison was patrolled by policemen wearing the blue velvet of the Savoia guards, the black uniforms of the Fascist police, and the red and black stripes of the carabinieri. From 1986 onwards prisoners were slowly transferred from Le Nuove to 'Le Vallette', a vast cement complex in the outskirts of the city. Le Nuove became a dormitory for guards and administrators and for a few prisoners in 'semi-libertà',³³ until it was finally closed in October 2003.

Today Le Nuove is a building in decay, a ruin. Plants grow out of the turrets and the generic construction sign 'Vietato l'ingresso ai non addetti ai lavori',³⁴ has replaced the armed guards and menacing signposts that made it inaccessible to common civilians while it was still a prison. Though it is partially protected as a heritage site,³⁵ most of its interior might soon be transformed into office space for the Ministry of Justice.³⁶ In this transitional phase the building is at once an ex-prison, a landscape in the process of being transformed, a memorial (to dead resistance fighters and assassinated prison guards) and a museum. As such it provides an ideal vantage point from which to discuss theories of cultural memory and place, the transmission of trauma and 'bad memories' over time, as well as to consider historical change through material traces and the way narratives are emplotted into space.

This thesis is structured around the physical configuration of the old prison building so that the subject matter discussed in each chapter has been chosen to fit thematically with the part of the prison each chapter relates to. Thus Chapter One on 'the gate' focuses on narratives concerned with entries and exits from the prison, Chapter Two on 'the cell' focuses mostly on prisoner memories, Chapter Three on 'the turret' focuses on the memories of prison guards, and so on. This choice to let the structure of the building guide the narration was not only a useful way of organizing quite complex narratives, it also allows for a further exploration of the

³³ A system by which prisoners with long sentences, often political prisoners, can find work outside of the prison but have to report back to the prison at night explained in Chapter Four.

³⁴ No access, authorized personnel only.

³⁵ By a land-marking certification signed by the then President of the Republic Oscar Luigi Scalfaro in 1999, see private papers of Padre Ruggero (uncatalogued).

³⁶ Gino Li Veli, 'Le Nuove recuperate diventeranno uffici' in *La Repubblica*, 1 Aprile 2003, p.5.

relationship between memory and place, and furthers a view of the prison as a palimpsest where multiple narratives and temporalities can be seen to coexist.

To help the reader visualize the very physical subject matter of this thesis I have included archival photographs as well as a series of professional photographs taken by Chiara Dalmaviva, a young photographer from Turin. Chiara's photographs, which appeared in an exhibition called 'Ristretti Orizzonti'-restricted horizons (which ran between 24 November and 15 December 2004, in Turin) capture the view that a visitor to Le Nuove had upon visiting the prison in the transitional period during which the research for this thesis was being conducted. The photographs insist on the haunting emptiness of the cells and corridors and on the visible traces of the lives that once populated the prison; they are thus essential illustrations to this work. I have decided not to analyse them but to use them as interruptions guiding the reader through the prison spaces I am addressing, so that he/she may be reminded of the fundamental alterity of the prison and of the many stories and prison events that have invariably remained outside the grasp of this project.

OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

Chapter One, on the Gate, introduces some of the main themes to emerge later in the thesis by presenting a general view of the material objects, people and times which went in and out of the prison through the front gate. The chapter focuses on the figure of Orazio Toscano, a volunteer tour guide in Le Nuove, and in particular on his story of the last time he saw his father, in order to explain the ways the rest of the thesis will be treating the re-narrativizations through which different social actors struggle over the meaning of Le Nuove.

Chapter Two, on the Cell, explores the complex relations inmates had with their cells and considers the extent to which these relations were shaped and affected by the prison space and by the rules of the prison institution, which also transformed over time.

Chapter Three, on the Turrets, focuses on the memories of prison guards as they relate in particular to the period of the *anni di piombo* and to the deaths of two of their colleagues, assassinated by the Red Brigades and *Prima Linea*. The chapter focuses on the rumours and myths surrounding these deaths and addresses the silences and secrets implicit in prison violence.

Chapter Four, on the Roof, focuses on the narratives surrounding three prison riots as they emerge from interviews today as well as from newspaper accounts from the time and from later years. It examines the disparity in memory between the early riots of 1969 and 1971 and the later riot of 1976, which seems to have left few concrete traces in memory. The chapter describes the political and legislative changes which affected the prison in the latter part of the 1970s and argues that these changes not only ended the season of riots which rattled the prison starting in 1969, but they also transformed the way the later riots were remembered.

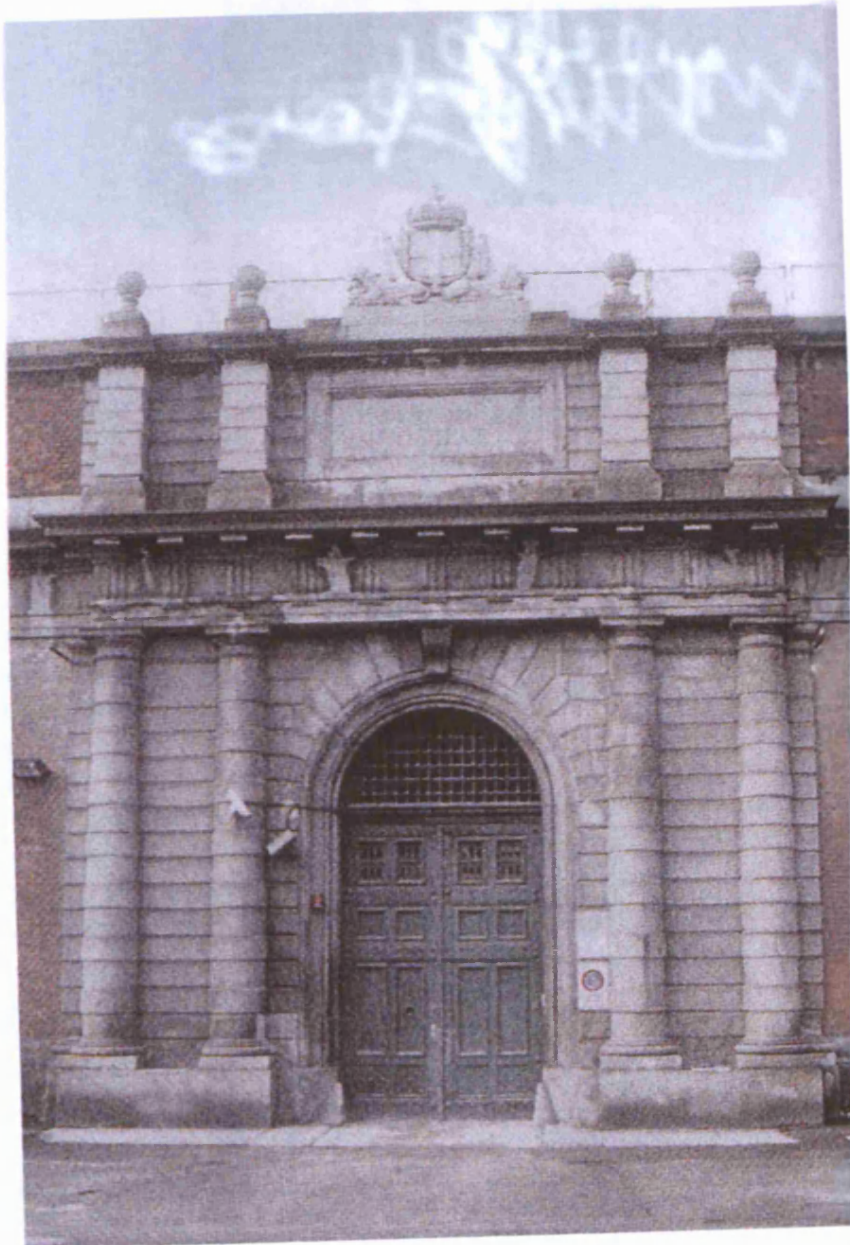
Chapter Five, considers the role of the church in the prison. It looks at the dominance of particular narratives surrounding church figures such as Padre Ruggero Cipolla and the nun Sister Giuseppina de Muro in the prison tours and memorial practices concerned with commemorating the Second World War in the prison. The chapter examines some of the competing voices remembering these church figures and complicates the heroic versions circulating about them by also considering the silences and omissions created by their stories.

Chapter Six, on the tour, examines the memorial techniques adopted by the volunteer organization *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola* as it attempts to consolidate Le Nuove's status as a heritage site. The chapter considers the fate of four other closed-down prisons; it draws parallels in the ways performances such as symbolic returns, memorial celebrations and the active re-inscription of meaning into prison spaces through tours, are used to ensure particular readings of these sites. The sites are seen as sacred and as intrinsically able, by their very physicality, to transmit emotions which can be transformed into historical knowledge. The chapter highlights the problems inherent in this view of prison sites and calls for an explicit articulation of our priorities for heritage based on knowledge of suffering from the past.

The chapter on the outer walls, concludes the thesis by considering the ways Le Nuove can still be seen to contain and embody dangerous meanings for the city. It examines the case of a demonstration which took place in 1998 outside the prison walls and considers how demonstrators seemed to play with some of the dangerous symbolic associations the prison site evoked. This case is used as an example of a performance by which various pasts from Le Nuove get reinscribed in the prison space and it further stresses that it is through performance that cultural memory is produced and elaborated. The chapter ends by asking Neil Harris's question: 'How long should a building live? Does it have, or does the larger community possess, certain rights to its survival? Do certain building types merit longer lives than others?'³⁷ and leaves the reader to ponder these questions in relation to Le Nuove prison.

³⁷ Neil Harris, *Building Lives: Constructing Rites and Passages*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1999, p.117.

CHAPTER ONE



THE GATE



Fig. 1-Orazio and his mother

In the spring of 1944, a little boy by the name of Orazio Toscano walked down Turin's main thoroughway, Corso Vittorio, holding his mother's hand, and stopped in front of the large stone gate at number 127. A crowd of people—mostly women—many dressed in thick peasant clothes and carrying bundles, stood before the gate, yelling and screaming. They were clamoring for their loved ones, whom they knew or suspected were being held by the Nazi and Fascist authorities behind the thick walls of the 19th century prison called Le Nuove.

Orazio and his mother had been told by a Fascist policeman that Diego Toscano, Orazio's father, had been captured in the mountains and was being held in Le Nuove for his membership in a partisan militia group³⁸. Mother and son walked to the prison every day. Sometimes big men dressed in black would come out and push them away with the butt of their rifles; sometimes they would be allowed in, only to be sent away by angry voices telling them Diego Toscano was nowhere to be seen and they must have received wrong information.

On the day in question, however, a military truck made its way through the crowd, aiming for the prison courtyard. The truck was carrying prisoners returning from the Hotel Nazionale³⁹ or the Caserma di Via Asti⁴⁰ and for a second, as the thick brown cloth covering the truck moved to the side, Orazio and his mother saw a figure with a bloody and swollen face make a gesture towards them, as if of recognition. Then the truck went on and disappeared behind the gate. Diego Toscano

³⁸ They later discovered he was part of the 105th Brigata Garibaldi.

³⁹ Headquarters of the Nazi police during the occupation of Turin and a place where partisans were interrogated and often tortured. See for example *Torino 1938/45 una guida per la memoria*. Città di Torino, Istituto Piemontese per la Storia della Resistenza e della Società Contemporanea, Turin, 2000, p.79

⁴⁰ Military compound used by the Fascist police for interrogation and torture. (Oral testimony)

was sent to Mauthausen shortly thereafter and never returned. His little boy, now an old man, continues to relive the scene, over and over, in his mind.

The above passage is my rendering of Orazio Toscano's story, which he tells to classes of schoolchildren and to anyone interested in visiting Le Nuove. Retold in my own wording it comes to be a shared story from Le Nuove of which there are many other examples that people carry away with them, following a visit to the building. Orazio belongs to the organization ANED-The National Association of Ex-Political Deportees⁴¹ in his father's name. He is also a volunteer for the organization *Nessun Uomo È Un'isola*,⁴² a varied group consisting mostly of resistance fighters from the Second World War who were held in Le Nuove, and of friends of the prison chaplain Padre Ruggero Cipolla.⁴³ To Orazio, and to most of the people in the volunteer organization, the prison building has been sacralized by trauma and forever marked by the events that took place within. Today they stand as witnesses, re-enacting their own suffering, connecting the empty space visitors see to the events that once took place in the prison.

Orazio Toscano is a very particular witness. He never set foot in the cells of Le Nuove while it was in use as a prison. As a child he was only allowed to peek into the dark hallways where his father might have been, the prison constituting the barrier between them, which he overcame only in that key moment at the gate, in which his desire to see his father may have conjured him up in the body of the tortured man, for that split second in which the cloth brought the hidden men into view. He has told me that taking care of the prison today is his way of being close to his father, whom he has never forgotten.

Orazio Toscano goes in and out of the prison almost every day, tending to the garden, escorting classes on school trips, dusting the chairs in the chapel. He says that in the past four years he must have been in the prison seven or eight hundred times but that in spite of all these entries every time he goes in he feels: '(...) a very strong emotion. You feel it because it is a place of suffering, you feel it when you go down in the cells where they kept the condemned men before executing them, (...)'

⁴¹ An oral history study of Piedmontese ANED members' recollections of their experiences of the camps can be found in Anna Bravo and Daniele Jalla (eds.), *La vita offesa: Storia e memoria dei lager nazisti nei racconti di 200 sopravvissuti*, Franco Angeli, Milan, 1986.

⁴² The organization will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Six.

⁴³ Padre Ruggero Cipolla will be discussed in Chapter Five.

it's a strong emotion...it's a place...there was too much suffering in here'.⁴⁴ To Orazio Toscano it is as though the events that occurred in the prison are still there, embedded into the building.

Victor Buchli and Gavin Lucas have pointed out, in the conclusion to their book *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past* that:

We would like to think that these sites, because they have been the scenes of exceptional or tragic events, intrinsically preserve the memory of those events. In fact, neither places nor things say anything whatsoever in themselves, unless it is to those who have memories of them. (...) What do we do when faced with these sites that are empty of meaning? To bear witness to this incommunicable past, it becomes necessary to tell stories; that is, to invent a history that could be told by the remains, or by the traces of past events.⁴⁵

Orazio Toscano has internalized the stories of Le Nuove, which he has heard mostly from other volunteers and from prison guards. When Orazio leads visitors along the empty corridors in the building he tells them his father's story, the stories of other resistance fighters held there during the war, but also more recent stories about riots and suicides, and he points to the empty places where those events occurred. There is no doubt in his mind that these sites have meaning, a meaning that he feels is both of a historical and of a personal nature.

When Orazio goes down into the prison cells where men were tortured and spent their last nights before being executed by nazi Fascist firing squads, he imagines the screams that were heard there, screams which he overlaps with those he actually remembers hearing as a child in his mother's house:

When they⁴⁶ tell me these stories I identify because I heard the yells of the Fascists and of the Germans. I didn't hear them inside the prison because back then I was a little boy so I didn't hear them inside the prison, but I heard them in my home when they came to look for my father and they screamed at my mother, they screamed and screamed and those things stayed inside of me, those screams. That's why when I go downstairs (in the prison) it isn't that I hear these screams but I have a strong feeling because there is a human story behind it, the story of a woman who is my mother with a little boy who had no support, neither moral nor financial (...) this woman finds herself with this boy she has to feed, and this boy doesn't know anything.

⁴⁴ From an interview with Orazio Toscano (my translation)

⁴⁵ Victor Buchli and Gavin Lucas, *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, p.184.

⁴⁶ The other volunteers who were actually held inside Le Nuove.

In his own narration the basement cells transmit the story of his mother and of himself as a little boy, left without husband and father, to fend for themselves in an unwelcoming world where the wife of a communist resistance fighter could find no job, and in which she eventually went crazy leaving her son completely abandoned in the bomb-shattered city of Turin.

For Orazio there are no natural boundaries between his own experience of being left fatherless and of the struggles he had to undergo as a child during the war, between the events that he knows took place in the prison, and the space he sees today. In this sense Orazio's story summarizes some of the main themes to emerge from this project, namely the permeability of prison spaces; the interconnection between prison memory and city history; the inscription of meaning into space through narratives; and how, to whom and why the prison building 'speaks' today.

Having hinted at these themes through the story of Orazio Toscano, this section will concentrate on permeability as a key concept for this study of memory and prison in Turin. It will first quickly discuss the ways prisons are seen as impermeable and inaccessible. It will then refer to evidence from my research to argue that Le Nuove can be seen as physically and temporally permeable. To see the prison as permeable relates prison events and prison memory to the larger history and cultural memory of Turin and it shows how prison can become a unique prism through which to look onto the past and its interpretation.

Over and over, in academic literature and in newspaper articles, prisons are treated as separate universes, sealed off from the world around them. Prisons are referred to as 'walled cities',⁴⁷ in which prisoners live 'buried from the world',⁴⁸ 'behind the razor wire',⁴⁹ a species apart having its own 'ecology'.⁵⁰ In countless studies of prison⁵¹ the outside world is never mentioned, other than to highlight the almost cliché problems that prisoners will encounter when they go back outside:

⁴⁷ Janet, Hart, 'Tales from the Walled City: Aesthetics of Political Prison Culture in Post-War Greece' in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol41 (3) 1999:482-509.

⁴⁸ Philip, Gura (ed.), *Buried from the World. Inside the Massachusetts State Prison 1829-1831*, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, 2001.

⁴⁹ Michael Jacobson-Hardy, *Behind the Razor Wire: Portrait of a Contemporary American Prison System*, New York University Press, New York, 1999.

⁵⁰ Hans, Toch, *Living in Prison, the Ecology of Survival*, American psychology association, Washington D.C., 1992.

⁵¹ The list could really be endless, just to give three examples see: Matthews, Roger, *Doing Time, an Introduction to the Sociology of Imprisonment*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1999.

Parisi, N. (ed.), *Coping with imprisonment*, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, California, 1982.

difficulties in finding jobs and re-establishing emotional ties; a tendency to fall back on criminal activities from before prison, improved by the knowledge and experience acquired from other prisoners inside.

Newspapers also ascribe to this notion of prisons as worlds on their own, regularly producing articles with titles such as: 'planet-prison, laboratory for new crimes',⁵² or 'Overflowing prisons, "islands" in the city, what can change?'⁵³ Or finally 'My prisons, or the parallel universe of the people without hope'.⁵⁴ The representations of prison in film and literature are varied and complex and there is no space to go into details about them here;⁵⁵ What can be said is that fictional accounts of prison contribute to the shared sense that prisons are places apart by treating the prison space as an exceptional and exotic landscape in which adventures can take place. Like outer space, desert islands, or the jungle, the prison is a landscape that emerges often in films, fiction, or cartoons, and it is a space that can be fantasized about and exaggerated mostly because it is largely unknown, and seen as 'other'.

Of course prisons in many ways *are* physically sealed off from the rest of society. Architecture is a key factor contributing to our understanding of prisons as isolated spaces. With their gates and intimidating walls, protected by armed men, prisons are made theatrically impregnable. Renzo Dubbini commented on the connection between the architecture of prisons and theaters, and on how the theater was part of the architectural intentions of those who built prisons in the 19th century. He writes: '(...) as a theater, as a space of redemption and at the same time of representation of punishment, it [the prison] is organized according to an authoritarian hierarchy of the gaze'.⁵⁶ Because events occurring in prison are hidden

⁵² Carlo Mosca, 'Pianeta-Carcere Laboratorio di Nuovi Delitti' in *La Repubblica* (date missing).

⁵³ A.R., 'Carceri Strapiene "isole" nella città cosa può cambiare?' in *Stampa Sera*, 1 October 1987, p.3.

⁵⁴ Lietta Tornabuoni, 'Le Mie Prigioni. Ovvero l'universo parallelo degli uomini senza speranza' in *L'Opinione*, 11 November 1984.

⁵⁵ Much can be said about the films and books that have prisoners as heroes and about the different genres in which prisons appear either as backgrounds of fear and violence or as the main focus of the story, as well as about stereotypical depictions of prison guards and even about the look of prisons themselves. The 1990s have seen a rise in films that take place for a major part inside prisons (see for example *American History X*, *the Shawshank Redemption*, *the Green Mile* among Hollywood blockbusters). Sean O'Sullivan discusses the ways these new films confirm and don't confirm to traditional cinematic renditions of prisons and how this may be related to the incredible rise in prison population in the United States over the past few decades: see Sean, O'Sullivan: 'Representations of Prison in Nineties Hollywood Cinema: From *Con Air* to *The Shawshank Redemption*.' in *The Howard Journal* Vol 40(4), 2001.

⁵⁶ Renzo Dubbini, *Architettura delle Prigioni. I luoghi e il tempo della punizione (1700-1880)*, Franco Angeli Editore, Milan, 1986, p.11 (My translation)

from view, enclosed behind thick walls, for the purposes of those outside, it is as though they never happened.

As much as Le Nuove may have been architecturally isolated from the rest of the city, it was deeply interconnected to Turin and to its larger history. Just considering the types of prisoners that existed within Le Nuove at any given time is in itself a reflection of particular realities and problems in the outside world. From the large numbers of defectors held in Le Nuove during the First World War; to the partisans of the Second World War; to the smugglers and black marketers of the immediate post-war years; to members of armed bands in the 1970s; each of these categories of criminals conveys a sense of the problems and threats facing a given age, while encapsulating some of the most dramatic events in Italian history.

A prison is not static, closed and materially constant. It is continuously transformed by the inmates who are brought there, by the workers who make it function, and by the flow of people and activities that shape time within its walls. This becomes evident when considering a prison like Le Nuove over a long time period, but it can be said, to varying degrees, of most prisons. As Lloyd Jenkins suggests in his article on the permeability of buildings: 'The permeability of a building is an important issue to study, as it defines the way in which actors pass from one space to another and the way in which boundaries are constructed'.⁵⁷ We can say that Le Nuove was and is permeable in two ways: one is physical, geographical, and follows the trajectories of bodies and things in and out of the gate; the other is temporal and symbolic and it follows the trajectories of myths and narratives that re-inscribe action into the building.

I will now show how Le Nuove could be seen as physically permeable during the time it was used as a prison, by drawing out detailed examples from oral history of what went in and out of the prison gate. For this purpose I will use the narratives from my interviews without discussing their broader meanings and interconnections to which I will return in later chapters, but simply as evidence of permeability.

Food made its way continuously in and out of the prison gate. It was bought on the outside, from subsidiary companies and carried in carriages and later in trucks to the prison. With the exception of the periods in which total isolation by solitary

⁵⁷ Jenkins, Lloyd, '11, Rue du Conservatoire and the Permeability of Buildings' in *Space & Culture*, Vol. 5 no.3 August 2002 pp.222-236, p.223.

confinement was in place,⁵⁸ of the prisoners held in the German section of the prison⁵⁹ during the final years of the Second World War, and of prisoners affected by the Article 90,⁶⁰ relatives were allowed to cook meals at home and take them to Le Nuove during visits. During and right after the Second World War, when food supplies were scarce, this meant elaborate petitioning for flour and sometimes even eggs from friends and other family members, to produce a hearty loaf of bread or even a sweet that would be carried in a cloth and left beyond the gate through a rolling door, 'like the ones used for abandoning infants'.⁶¹

Luca Nicolotti, still in prison⁶² for his participation in the Red Brigades,⁶³ remembered the food brought in by the mother of one of his cellmates:

We tried whenever possible to have our meetings with family members spread out along the week so we could have home-cooked food almost every night; it was like an extended family. Then at the meetings you met the mother of your cellmate and you complimented her on her food, it was a ritual! I remember a piece of swordfish that the mother of one of my cellmates made that was to die for!

Food allowed for a level of normality to be brought into the prison, and for a parent to continue providing for his/her child and friends just like on the outside. After the prison reform of 1975⁶⁴ prisoners were allowed to cook in their cells.⁶⁵ Prisoners would bake cakes on the day before a meeting and the cakes would then be eaten together in the visiting room, and would make their way out of the prison in the bellies of visitors.

During holidays Padre Ruggero, the chaplain in Le Nuove from 1944 to 1994, would bring in gallons of beer or wine, chocolates or polenta, packages of fruit,

⁵⁸ In practice probably until the Rocco legal code was passed in 1931.

⁵⁹ An 'arm' of the prison, which was under German legal control and where Jewish and political prisoners were held with no possibility of contact with the outside world.

⁶⁰ A clause in the 1975 prison reform, which applied to prisoners considered particularly dangerous and in prison for crimes relating to the mafia and to terrorism. It included the interruption of all internal mail, censoring of external mail, interruption of all cultural, sport and recreational activities, of phone communications with relatives, of the clothing and food packages and of all visits with loved ones.

⁶¹ From an interview with Irma Ingaramo, wife of Ennio Pistoi, a Catholic resistance fighter held in Le Nuove during Nazi occupation.

⁶² Nicolotti works outside and has to go back to the prison at night.

⁶³ See appendix 1.

⁶⁴ See appendix 3.

⁶⁵ Giorgio Zanini, who was held in Le Nuove for only a few days in 1968 following his arrest at a demonstration, remembered being extremely impressed by a system his cellmates had developed to cook food, using newspapers. While he was there they managed to cook a rabbit using nothing but newspapers curled up and allowed to burn very slowly in a circle.

which he could buy thanks to a large network of private donors⁶⁶ as well as from donations from some of Turin's richest enterprises.⁶⁷ Several inmates talked about these packages during interviews. F.R. remembered: 'I remember that once, I don't know for which holiday, Padre Ruggero gave us 'il cordiale'. I remember it was a little package of liqueur. (...) I remember that it was really appreciated by the inmates. In fact they could make 'caffè corretto'⁶⁸ or there were some who even sucked on the little bag and ate it up'. These items, distributed along the calendar year to mark the main religious holidays, drew a connection between the parishes and households of 'do-gooders' and those inside to ensure that prisoners be incorporated in the 'imagined community'⁶⁹ of the city as well as ensuring that they participate, albeit minimally, in the celebrations occurring outside.

There were many forbidden things that made their way into the prison through the front gate: cards and pornography;⁷⁰ money to bribe a jailer; tools to try to make an escape; political pamphlets; weapons of all kinds⁷¹; orders to kill other inmates;⁷² and then in later years, drugs. Drugs sometimes came in stuck to the prison chaplain's car, as F.R., an inmate held in prison for petty crimes related to his heroin addiction, remembered:

They got away with all kinds of things with him [the chaplain, Padre Ruggero], I mean, he was so good, there were people who followed him on the outside and his very famous 127⁷³ that he had outside (...) well, they stuck all kinds of narcotics underneath it, the more the merrier! Imagine! Who would check Padre Ruggero's Car? Nobody!

⁶⁶ In the Archive of Padre Ruggero Cipolla there is a large notebook labelled 'donations'; on each page next to the name and address of the donors there is a recording of the exact sum (or substance) that was donated and when the last donation occurred. When donors failed to make a donation for more than two years in a row their names would be crossed out with a blue pencil. The many letters that were sent and the practice of keeping detailed records were extremely time-consuming and were probably used by Padre Ruggero to keep some of his favorite inmates occupied.

⁶⁷ See lists in Archive of Padre Ruggero, convent di S. Bernardino da Siena, Saluzzo, boxes 38 and 39. He also petitioned directly to food, wine and beer producers to make voluntary donations; as for example was the case every year with the beer company Bosio and Carastch (from an oral testimony by the daughter of a man on the board of the beer company, Lucia Bonafini).

⁶⁸ Coffee with liqueur in it.

⁶⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London, 1983.

⁷⁰ Listed among forbidden material in the box containing 'Registro perquisizioni celle 1948-1949' in fondo Le Nuove Casa Circondariale di Torino, in the Archivio di Stato di Torino, box 303. They were probably forbidden until the prison reform of 1975.

⁷¹ See, for example, article by Alessandro Rigaldo, 'Come le armi entrano nelle carceri', in *Stampa Sera*, 13 May 1975, p.6.

⁷² See for example the article by Nino Pietropinto, 'Il comitato di lotta in carcere decise di dare una lezione a Salvatore Cinieri' in *La Stampa*, 21 March 1981, p.6.

⁷³ FIAT car

Statistics and legal documents went out of the prison in massive boxes and files, to shape public policy or to weigh down on the already overloaded judicial system. Suicides and murders would bring in eager journalists and carry out more myths about 'life inside'. Frequent escapes made walls and guards seem meaningless and ridiculous- the thief and murderer Franco Barone, for example, once presented himself at the gate claiming to be another prisoner whose sentence had expired and simply walked out, smiling and waving at the guards.⁷⁴

Books arrived in crates or in the arms of idealistic young teachers. Scales, trays, and plastic flowers were put together in the prison and brought outside by company trucks, and were then sold as cheap goods by local manufacturing companies.⁷⁵ New fashions came in on the bodies of newer inmates or visiting relatives. Rosalba, a beautician who came to the prison twice a week would introduce new hairdos and new colours to liven the heads of inmates. As Susanna Ronconi, who served time for participating in the armed band Prima Linea⁷⁶ remembers:

You would make the notorious domandina⁷⁷ and she would come twice a week. I went there too, often, and dyed myself all kinds of colours, because you know, in your life in there it was a moment of normality (...) It was a bit funny (...) she had a special cell just for her with two sinks and professional hairdryers. She would do everything and sometimes you saw people coming out of there looking extremely strange. What was nice was that in there we recreated the atmosphere of the beauty parlor outside, in other words people talked about their private matters, commented on this and that, 'gossip'⁷⁸ of all kinds.

Rosalba would carry the prison gossip out with her and repeat the most exciting pieces to the ladies sitting inside her shop, in Corso Trapani.

Personal relations only rarely stopped at the gate, at least for prisoners with reasonably short sentences. Those bonds constituted prisoners' strongest link to the world outside and were often determining factors for the suffering felt inside the

⁷⁴ P.p.b. 'Come si evade dalle Nuove salutati da tutte le guardie', *La Stampa*, 24 August, 1976, p.10.

⁷⁵ Giovenale -Fabbrica Bilici Torino; Todros- industria vassoi e affini; Dutto e Masutti-industria fiori di plastica. All employed, at least for some time, prisoners from Le Nuove. (From oral testimony, the archive of Padre Ruggero Cipolla and the prison archive held in the Archivio di Stato di Torino).

⁷⁶ She was one of the leaders of the SAP, Squadre Armate Proletarie, which merged with Prima Linea in 1978. See appendix 1.

⁷⁷ Literally: 'little question', 'little request', it was a sheet of paper through which prisoners asked for permission to use facilities inside the prison, to see a doctor, to speak to their lawyer, to meet with relatives, to have a shower, etc. Susanna Ronconi refers to the domandina as 'famosa'-notorious- probably pointing at how vital this form of request was for gaining access to anything inside the prison.

⁷⁸ In English in her story

prison. F.R. who was held in Le Nuove during the 1980s for drug-related crimes, remembered the first visit with his parents:

Well, I went inside that place in March of 1985 and I got out the day of my mother's birthday, which was the 3 of April. I did 28 days (...). What can I tell you? Coming in was a shock impact, traumatic because I was 25 years old, I was young, it was the first time that I happened to set foot in an institution...ugly, ugly. Also because my parents didn't have the faintest idea of what I had been doing so they came to visit me in the meeting room the first time and I still had the last holes in my arms (...) porca miseria, they knew they had a son who was kind of vivacious but...I can let you imagine our first meeting, my father was crying, I was crying, well, it was devastating really.

F.R. framed the chronology of his time in prison in connection to his mother's birthday. Time did not 'stop' for him inside, it was rather connected to his parents' time, and to the suffering he knew he caused them. The prison provided a background for a kind of reckoning, in which F.R. was no longer able to hide his addiction from his parents. Implied in his parents visit and the unusual occurrence of his father crying in front of him, were the pain, shame and worry that his parents took outside with them as they left their son behind.

Guards and prison directors would be sent to Le Nuove from all over the country, leaving behind their families or taking them with them into the prison, to live in the apartments especially provided by the state. Guards came mostly from the South and from poorer areas of Italy. As Carmelo Parente, a retired prison guard, remembers:

I was unemployed. I had lots of little jobs but nothing was certain so I decided to become a prison guard to have a safe income. So I decided to enlist in the corps of the prison guards and I enlisted. In Sicily. From Sicily there was an ARMY of young men who enrolled, back then, I am talking about back then, fifty years ago, just after the war.

Regional and class prejudices would not stop at the gate, as is evident from the many complaints that prison guards laughed against prisoners who offended them by commenting on their regional origin. Insults were re-written word for word in forms whose language was otherwise quite bureaucratic:

To the Commander, I inform you of the following: having been commanded to bring inmate D'ELIA ANTONIO back to cell 546 as I referred the orders to the inmate he answered me with the following: 'Inside the cell you can

close your father and your mother, go away you southern italian cop (sbirro meridionale) when I get out I'll show you who I am' .⁷⁹

Or a more specific insult, revealing prejudices towards people from Sardinia: 'You are nothing but an ugly asshole, you bastard and damned cop! (...) go back to Sardinia and tend to sheep!'⁸⁰

Especially in the 1970s, when prisoners started to organize politically and to stage riots and hunger strikes on a national scale, there were political networks that stretched outside the prison and connected the rioting prisoners to political forces outside. Giorgio Bocca in his popular book on terrorism wrote that 'The prisoners' movement tried to fuse with Lotta Continua, the most open movement of the new left that created a 'prison commission'. The ex prisoners that little by little joined the movement created a non-sustainable tension. They wanted everything and immediately'. He suggested that while the politicians in Lotta Continua parted from the prisoner's movement 'a small group of ex-prisoners joined some Neapolitan students to start an armed struggle, to form the NAP⁸¹ or armed proletarian units'.⁸² There seems to have been a constant flow of political actions and ideas into and out of the prison, a cross-fertilization of revolutionary ideas that led to new forms of terrorism and political violence, which would also inevitably lead people back to prison. During riots, when prisoners stood up on the roofs with signs asking for better prison conditions or for total revolution, groups of demonstrators would stand in front of the prison gate holding similar signs, effectively making the prisoner's demonstration spill out into the streets.⁸³

The list could go on indefinitely. It could consider the movements of objects as trivial as the boats prisoners made and sent out of the prison as gifts to their defense lawyer;⁸⁴ It could also follow the movements of Valentina, the daughter of a

⁷⁹ From the Registro Rapporti Disciplinari Detenuti 3/6/1976, Archivio di Stato di Torino Fondo 'Casa Circondariale Le Nuove box 3452 folder 1 (my translation)

⁸⁰ Same as above.

⁸¹ See Appendix 1.

⁸² Giorgio, Bocca, *Il terrorismo italiano 1970-1980*, Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, Milan, 1981, p.69. (My translation)

⁸³ See for example article by Vincenzo Tessandori and Gianni Bisio: 'Giornata di estrema tensione alle Nuove detenuti sui tetti, mobilitati 1400 uomini. La protesta, iniziata l'altra sera, continua ancora-Dall'alto del carcere, mascherati, i prigionieri urlano slogans e accuse alle guardie: "Pagando ci portano coltelli e droga; evadere costa un milione"-Tentativi di pacificazione del direttore e di Giuliana Cabrini-Scontri tra polizia ed extraparlamentari-Nella notte l'annuncio: "il carcere è ingovernabile; interverrà la forza"', *La Stampa*, 9 September 1976, p.4.

⁸⁴ From an interview with Aldo Perla.

Prima Linea inmate,⁸⁵ born in prison, who- escorted by her grandparents- made her way in and out of the prison where she lived for the first three years of her life, to attend a public nursery school.

Although the gate of the prison barred entrance to ‘non authorized people,’ each entry and exit past the gate nevertheless involved a network of relations and meanings that stretched out well beyond the prison space. Entrances and exits and the nature of what was brought inside were time specific. When we talk about the ‘memory of the prison’ we are really referring to many different prisons whose contents and shapes were continuously transformed by developments in the outside world, by legal reforms, by changes in patterns of criminality, by immigration, etc. ‘History’ did not stop at the gates of the prison, but it filtered in to shape and transform the experience of prison at any given time.

I have shown how following the trajectories of objects and people in and out of the prison gate can be seen as a marker of physical permeability, of the connections between the space of the prison and the outside world. I will now argue that the prison building as it stands today perpetuates particular images of the past, which are produced by social agents who transmit them into the present to people encountering the building.

Le Nuove can then be seen as ‘simultaneously contemporary and something of the past’.⁸⁶ It is contemporary because it has a shape in 2004, and it can be visited and transformed. It is also something of the past because it has been written about and spoken about, because it bears the material traces of events that occurred in it and because it reflects, in the very structuring of its stones and mortars, the work of countless city meetings, the decisions of the sovereign and his advisors, the sweat of the men who built it back in the late 1860s.⁸⁷ Not all of the pasts of Le Nuove filter into the present, and one of the aims of this project is to consider which ‘pasts’ are reinscribed into the present, in what ways, and why.

Later chapters will discuss the recurring myths and narratives, which contribute to particular re-inscriptions of the past into the prison building. For the

⁸⁵ From an interview with Susanna Ronconi.

⁸⁶ Lloyd Jenkins, ‘Geography and Architecture. 11, Rue du Conservatoire and the Permeability of Buildings’, *Space and Culture*, vol.5, no.3, Sage Publications, 2002, p.234.

⁸⁷ See: Vera Comoli-Mandracci, *Il carcere per la società di sette-ottocento – il carcere giudiziario di Torino detto “le Nuove”*, Centro Studi Piemontesi, Turin, 1974.

purposes of this section let us simply go back to Orazio Toscano's story and to the morning in 1944 in which he may or may not have seen his father. Every time Orazio Toscano stands in front of the gate with visitors, he tells them about the truck coming in through the crowd and about his glimpse at the wounded man inside the truck. This past is for Orazio a 'truth sought', as M. K. Matsuda writes:

No history can be pure event, pure evolution; each is rather a repetition, a return to a story which must be retold, distinguished from its previous tellings. The past is not a truth upon which to build, but a truth sought, a re-memorizing over which to struggle. The fragmentary, disputatious, self-reflexive nature of such a past makes a series of 'memories' - ever imperfect, imprecise, and charged with personal questions-the appropriate means for rendering the 'history' of the present.⁸⁸

Orazio's storytelling is his way of bringing the past back into the present, of polishing its painful edges, of transforming its senselessness into something meaningful. In Orazio's story the man in the truck really is his father, and his 'gesture of recognition' is a goodbye. In the poignancy of the moment, re-enacted by Orazio as an old man, visitors today can feel the temporal permeability of the building, and the way parts of the past are brought back to give meaning to the building in the present.

Whether that past ever was is irrelevant. A skeptic could, for example find a striking resemblance between Orazio's memory and a scene from Roberto Rossellini's classic film *Roma città aperta*-Rome Open City. His memory in fact is like a reversal of the camera angle set in place during the scene in which Francesco is being arrested by the Germans and watches from the truck as his wife, Pina (played by Anna Magnani) runs after him screaming and is then shot. As the truck moves on, the camera pans to Pina's little boy who cries out to her and runs over to her fallen body in tears. Even assuming that Orazio did indeed draw from Rossellini's powerful film in the visual recounting of his own memory of his meeting with his father, this only strengthens the pathos and pain contained in Orazio's story, his feelings towards his father and the pain he imagines in his father's last glance at a wife and child he knew he was leaving in trouble. Strikingly, Alessandro Portelli reports almost an identical story from Rosetta Stame, one of his interviewees in his project on the Fosse Ardeatine:

⁸⁸ Matt K. Matsuda, *The Memory of the Modern*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1996, p.15.

In front of Regina Coeli, in a crease in the cloth that covers the truck, Rosetta Stame perceives perhaps the last goodbye of her father. 'We were waiting and so I started to call out 'papá, papá!'-daddy! Daddy! At a certain point at the third truck-I saw staring straight at these trucks- from the cloth on the higher part I saw the movement of a head...a clear movement-it isn't my fantasy, I saw a movement, I can't prove it but I am convinced, I am certain, that daddy recognized my voice and that he couldn't reply because there were Germans at his sides, sitting on the edge of the truck, but he made a gesture with his head, he made the curtain move'.⁸⁹

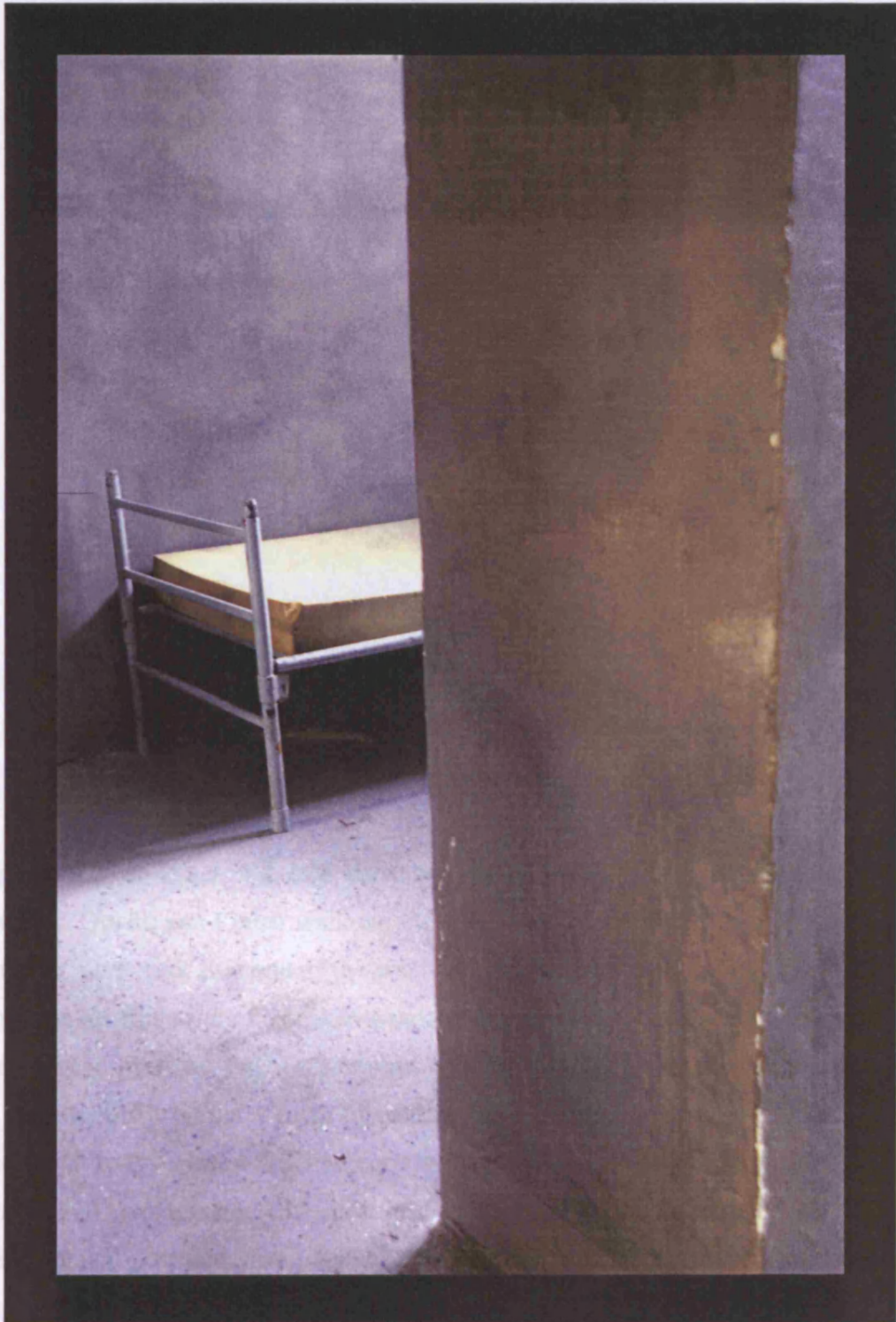
Unlike Orazio who doesn't question his own narrative, Rosetta Stame keeps emphasizing that the scene is not her fantasy, that she is really certain she saw her father, and thus indirectly she suggests that it might be possible that her story is a product of her painful and frustrated desire to see him, to have said goodbye properly, one last time. The similarities between Orazio and Rosetta's story point to their shared experience of watching their fathers taken away from them, swallowed by the prison and by the Nazi occupying forces. If Orazio and Rosetta were subconsciously borrowing from Rossellini to construct an image of their goodbye to their fathers, which they could live with, this also tells us something about the effect that film had on the symbolic universe of the 1940s and further points to a need to draw out the creative influences and impulses of shared historical experience.

Orazio's story is one personal rendering of an event that took place during the Second World War. By examining the many strands of narrative that emerge from interviews and from the building itself, from the museum and the commemorative plaques marking particular events, this project will consider the broader re-memorializing over which various groups struggle for the meaning of the past of 'Le Nuove.' The 're-memorializations' surrounding the building, in which various social actors construct autobiographies of courage and heroism as well as mythologies of violence, will reveal unhealed wounds and unresolved events, and may provide a new angle from which to look critically onto the past and the 'history of the present'.

⁸⁹ Alessandro Portelli, *L'ordine é già stato eseguito. Roma: Fosse Ardeatine, la memoria*, Donzelli, Rome, 2001, p.234.

THE CELL

CHAPTER TWO



THE CELL

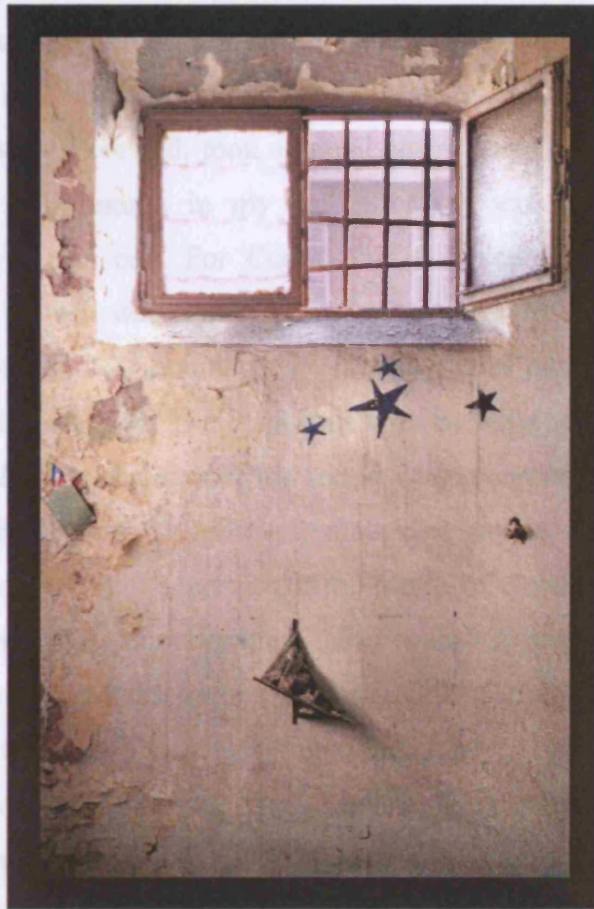


Fig.2- Cell window- Photo courtesy of Chiara Dalmaviva

A long corridor stretches out into darkness. Light barely filters in from barred windows and Orazio and I must walk carefully to avoid pieces of brick and glass on the ground. As we walk past one of the cells we hear the frantic fluttering of feathers as a pigeon takes flight out of a broken window. We enter a cell and see the remnants of a bed whose bars are the rusty-orange colour of nursery school chairs with a yellow foam mattress partially eaten by rats, covered in mould. Behind a half wall is the toilet, and a very narrow kitchen counter, covered in dirt and broken tiles. The walls of the cell are encrusted with incongruous layers of paint; the torn paper bodies of naked women, postcards from Italian coastal cities, and a Christ pointing to his bleeding heart, are the only immediately visible traces left by those who once lived here.

When Renato Curcio, one of the ‘historic leaders’ of the Red Brigades, was getting ready to leave his prison cell in Rebibbia⁹⁰ to begin a period of *semi-libertà*⁹¹ before being finally released from prison, he wrote a series of reflections, which he published as a book entitled *La soglia*-the threshold. In this book he twice returned to an episode he had read about a certain inmate, Marcant, who on the 16th of August 1889, just before being executed, took a pencil and wrote: ‘I leave to my friend Le Baigneur all that will remain in my cell after my execution’⁹²- Marcant had absolutely nothing in his cell. For Curcio this will contained an essential truth ‘precisely because the cell was empty. Marcant left *himself* to his friend, his unique singularity, cut short by capital punishment, his cell full of memories, his will to live interrupted and left suspended. The emptiness with no object of the cell would have spoken of him, at least to the ears of his friend who mourned him and would have liked to have seen him again’.⁹³ Walking in the cells today, as outsiders, we are faced with the emptiness left by the departure of thousands of inmates who for some time left ‘themselves’ in the space between those walls. It would be impossible to reconstruct the hours and days spent by thousands of inmates in Le Nuove’s cells from the 1870s to today, but walking through the empty prison we may imagine the lost hours and days still haunting those spaces. This chapter will examine the memories of prisoners speaking about their cells, which for some time served as their homes. As in Marcant’s case these are individual stories that escaped the institution’s physical annihilation, they are memories of agency, of coping mechanisms and solidarity, of lives squeezed into four walls, of time burned and consumed in waiting. These fragments of memory of the cell will explore the ways inmates recall being ‘thwarted by the prior presence of their homes/’cells⁹⁴ and will focus on the cell as a palimpsest upon which different times are mapped and persist as a haunting.

Michel Foucault listed prisons amongst what he called ‘heterotopias.’ Unlike ‘utopias,’ which are sites that have no place in reality, heterotopias are real places, which are absolutely different from all other places while at the same time being linked to all places in a mirror relationship. According to Foucault ‘the heterotopia is

⁹⁰ Prison in Rome.

⁹¹ Legal arrangement by which prisoners who have been on good behavior after long sentences can arrange to work outside the prison as long as they return to the prison at night. This usually represents the final phase of their captivity after which they will be released.

⁹² Renato Curcio, *La Soglia*, Sensibili alle Foglie, Rome, 1994, p.25.

⁹³ Curcio, *La Soglia*, *ibid.* p.38.

⁹⁴ Daniel Miller (ed.), *Home Possessions, Material Culture Behind Closed Doors*, Berg, Oxford, 2001, p.10.

capable of juxtaposing in a single real space, several sites that are in themselves incompatible'.⁹⁵ Heterotopias 'have the curious property of being in relation with all other sites but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror or reflect'.⁹⁶ Perhaps no other site in the prison captures Foucault's sense of heterotopia more than the prison cell itself. The cell stands for a prisoner's 'home' inside the prison, cell-mates stand for 'family' and the cell space during the day time is supposed to be 'study' and 'work' space. While partially serving all of these functions the cell is also the primary site of punishment on the individual body in prison, and part of the punishment derives precisely from the skewing and negative mirroring of all those functions: the cell is first of all deprivation of freedom, distance from family, unrest, punishment as inertia, lack of mental space to concentrate and lack of work.

The cell according to Foucault is the fundamental unit of the prison used to organize and control inmates and it is the ideal 'compartment' structured by the disciplinary machine, which makes inmate bodies knowable and controlled through architecture.⁹⁷ Yet individual memories of the cell and experiences in it tend to defy Foucault's vision of 'docile bodies' manipulated and moved by the institution. This chapter will focus on some of my informants' most vivid memories relating to the prison cell, memories that are intensely bodily; from the arrival in the cell, to the rituals and negotiations relating to food and daily life, to coping with time, to the moments of disruption and self-harm, all these examples from interviews will present a memory of 'restless bodies' and will hopefully fill the empty space of the cells with mythologies and self-representations that speak of individuals as well as of the cell as a lived, imagined and remembered space.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS, ARRIVALS...

*A Torino a Porta Susa,
a pochi passi dalla stazione,
hanno fatto una galera ma la chiamano prigione.
(...)
All'entrata v'è un gran cancello ,
che essi per gentilezza,
lo chiamano solo cancelletto,
e passando v'è un lungo corridoio,*

*In Turin at Porta Susa
just a few blocks from the station,
they built a jail but they call it prison
(...)
At the entrance there is a great gate
which they, out of kindness,
just call a 'little gate'
And coming in there is a long corridor*

⁹⁵ Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', *Diacritics*, vol. 16 (1986), n.1, p. 25.

⁹⁶ Michel Foucault, *ibid.* p. 24.

⁹⁷ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, Alan Sheridan (trans.), Penguin Books, London, 1977, part III, section 1. 'docile bodies'.

-Transcription and translation by Cesare Lombroso of anonymous poem from the Piedmontese.⁹⁸

We all have a picture of what arriving in prison for the first time might be like, a recurrent fantasy/nightmare in which we see ourselves dragged down a dark corridor and registered. Our fingers are blackened by institutional ink, and then we stand, ashamed or defiant, holding a little blackboard with a number, for our mug shot. In real prisons this procedure happens in the matriculation office, where inmates are asked for their names and the names of their parents, wives and children. Their crimes are registered on the same paper, and placed in a folder which will be taken out whenever inmates commit a prison infraction, whenever they have to go to court, and when they finally leave the prison and sign their exit forms. The scene of 'induction' is played over and over in films but it was surprisingly absent from my interviewees' recollections. Only one interviewee began his story talking about his picture being taken and how awful it felt to stand there 'like in the movies'. All the others rather insisted on their arrival in their cells as defining moments, the true beginning of their prison experience.

The experience of arrival was often described as surprising since the prison presented a landscape quite different from that usually seen in films. Films about prison tend to show prison cells as bare and monochromatic,⁹⁹ containing very little furniture and few inmates. A notable exception to these cinematic representations of prison cells is the Brazilian film *Carandiru*,¹⁰⁰ which depicts one of São Paulo's most infamous prisons as a space full of colour, full of things, and life, where inmates are busily engaged in all kinds of activities, many of them criminal and self-destructive, as they move continuously from one cell to another. *Carandiru*'s depiction of prison life is probably closer to Le Nuove in the post-war years than many of the aseptic images of prisons from other films.

Far from being the silent tomb-space for contemplation and repentance it was conceived as, for several of my informants the first impression of Le Nuove was of

⁹⁸ Cesare Lombroso, *Palimsesti del carcere*, Bocca, Turin, 1891.

⁹⁹ To give just a few recent examples consider the Hollywood films: Tony Kaye, *American History X* (USA, 1998); Marc Forster, *Monster's Ball* (USA 2001); Frank Darabont, *The Green Mile* (USA 1999); or even Jim Jarmoush's less recent comedy *Down By Law* (USA, 1986).

¹⁰⁰ Hector Babenco, *Carandiru* (Brazil/Argentina, 2003)

an overwhelming, noisy, chaotic space in which it was very difficult if not impossible to be alone and concentrate. Two ex inmates used the metaphor of the market, and called Le Nuove a 'bazaar' or a 'suq'. Even in the confines of the prison cell the noise from the main corridor and from other prison cells was ubiquitous. Mauro Salmoira describes his arrival in Le Nuove this way:

There it was a bazaar where the wall was coming undone, where mice maybe came out of the Turkish toilet, where everything is crumbling and people are squashed one on top of the other. When it's that way social relations change, the way you are changes, your time to live and to think changes because you have a different relationship, there is constant noise all day.

Noise was something which inmates had to adjust to, the constant noise of people talking, televisions blaring, of doors opening and slamming. Mauro Salmoira complained: 'There is one screaming on one side, one on the other, and the doors opening and closing and the noise that reaches really far (...), there is always a door opening and closing, never a moment of silence except at night'. Susanna Ronconi also recalled how upon entering Le Nuove she was shocked by the noise and she felt a shocking difference between the great judicial prison and the smaller prisons she had been held in before. She referred to Le Nuove as a 'panottico suq'-a suq panopticon- and said that:

The impact was first of all a visual impact because there (...) you enter into the section and you have all the balconies that look onto this central corridor so it's an image...well, for me it's the image of the total institution much more than the special prisons (...). So this enormous funnel full of faces that look down, full of noise that's another thing that struck me (as opposed to special prisons) this was also a bit the feeling of a big market square in a certain way. So music, screams, shrieks, and laughter, people who talk really loud. So something between an idea of the total institution container, an insane asylum, those kinds of places but also after all a pulsating life, very present, which I hadn't encountered in the other prison structures I had been to. So this was on one side a pleasurable encounter because I felt like I was coming out of silence, but on the other also slightly disturbing for me because I had structured my incarceration with a certain life rhythm, which allowed me to survive, so certainly to chat, but also to read, also to study, also to have moments of solitude.

Susanna Ronconi kept referring to terms such as 'total institution' or 'panopticon' and compared prisons to other institutions such as the insane asylum. Her description of her arrival located her as an outside observer, and one quite conscious of existing discussions and representations of prison- Foucault being a clear influence on her way of seeing the prison. It is not clear if she suggested that these were her impressions of the prison at the time or whether this was an ex-post-facto assessment

aimed at marking her as free and wanting to present herself to me as knowledgeable of prison literature. In either case this vision of Le Nuove as a market square and noisy bazaar was specific to periods of overcrowding, particularly from the mid-1970s onwards when inmates found themselves in cells with up to nine inmates and when riots and other forms of internal struggle had led to certain practical improvements, such as keeping the cell doors open until night time or being allowed to have dinner in other cells. While seeming more lively and humane than the more isolationist prisons like the special prisons, the noise and chaos deprived individuals of mental space and of the peace they may sometimes have derived from solitude.

There were times, such as during the Second World War, when the prison was silent but solitude was terrifying and brought anything but peace to those who were led there. Marisa Scala, who was arrested for partisan activities, remembers arriving at Le Nuove in the middle of the night, escorted by an irritated German who screamed and cursed because nobody was coming to open the door. Past the main gate a nun finally came and began shaking a very loud set of keys and then she escorted Marisa through a dark and silent corridor:

Of the dark corridor I remember a light at the end and I remember the German's steps, he must have been wearing shoes that were clearly not for dancing, boots, that hit against the stone of the hallway. It was, well (...) the first impact was an awful thing. I remember the German's footsteps, the darkness leading me to the unknown.

Rather than facing the impact of the noise of hundreds of people talking, looking, Marisa Scala was escorted through a completely silent place, where she felt alone with the hard echoing footsteps of the German. The inmates in her hallway were all people who would spend their days at the Hotel Nazionale or the Caserma di Via Asti¹⁰¹ where they would be interrogated, and often tortured. At night they probably lay exhausted on their cots and were not allowed to talk to anyone.

Inmates talk about a real difference between day and night in the prison. Even in times of overcrowding and chaos, nighttime brought with it darkness and silence. Luca Nicolotti talks about the night as his study time:

In the penal section when I was there, there were big cells and we could be six with the cots on the ground, there was just barely a bit of space in the

¹⁰¹ Respectively the headquarters of the Gestapo and of the Italian SS in Turin during the period 1943-45.

centre. There were two small tables built into the walls, we would put curtains around them and you could be on your own, a bit like an American Indian tent (laughs). At night that space was ideal for preparing for exams and I studied well at night.

Nighttime could provide privacy and calm for working and concentrating. Daytime was an open time in the prison. Inmates would leave their cells to meet lawyers and judges, relatives, to go outside and exercise, to go to church or to play football. After six o'clock at night, doors would be locked until morning. During the war the German section of the prison was held in a state of permanent nighttime. Inmates could not speak, could not leave their cells, they could not read or attend mass, they could have no visitors and no mail. For all intents and purposes the inmates in the German wing were to be buried alive, frozen in a sleep from which only the Germans could awaken them. This threat, hidden in the silence inmates were forced to live in, meant that sleep in this 'night wing' was difficult if not impossible. At dawn all ears would be perked because that was the time that the Germans would come get people to take them to be interrogated, tortured and possibly killed.¹⁰²

On her first night Marisa felt a real terror, terror of the unknown: 'The nun opened a door, again rough metal sounds...well that is what stays in my ears it isn't the door being opened, the gate, but it's the metal jumble, the feeling of something stronger, harder than wood...you can lean on a wooden door after all, she opened the cell and told me, don't you worry, tomorrow we'll give you something to drink'. Marisa's memory of her first contact with her prison cell and the prison in general focuses on materials which are harder than those she knew outside, they are foreign and frightening: the German's boots which were not dancing shoes, the metal door which you could not lean on, different from wood. Even the little human comfort she was to get from the nun was deferred to the next morning. It is significant that Marisa was not given coffee but rather told that she would be given something to drink in the morning. Rationing in the city made all resources extremely scarce during the war and inmates were given reduced portions of food, something which continued well after the war and accounted in part for the explosion of very serious prison riots in prisons all across Italy including Le Nuove in the latter months of 1945.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Interview with Ennio Pistoì.

¹⁰³ For a discussion of these riots, with a particular focus on the riots in the Milan prison of S. Vittore see John Foot, 'The Tale of S. Vittore: prisons, politics, crime and Fascism in Milan 1943-1946', *Modern Italy*, vol. 3 (1998), n.1, pp.25-48. For the original newspaper account of these riots in Turin

The nun left Marisa alone in her cell:

She closed me in, it was a small cell, not like now that they widened them, it was a small cell with a cot inside. I didn't lie down and I saw, the only thing I saw was that there was a high window and maybe the moon was out, there was a glow, either it was the moon or a street lamp that was giving off a reflection, well I saw a light coming from outside.

Marisa's story presented the prison cell as a place of silence and loneliness, where she did not feel comfortable or ready to even stretch out and where she sat scared and awake until dawn, in a light that might have been the moon, or a colder electric light.

Marisa's story of her first night in Le Nuove and especially the detail of the moon/electric light conforms to imagery of incarceration passed on through popular representations such as song. A passage from an old Piedmontese/Ligurian ballad, possibly about Le Nuove goes as follows:

*Ed ora sono in questa oscura cella
dimenticato da colei che amo ancor
se ci ripenso mi manca la favella
ed il dolore rattrista il mio cuor*

(And now I am in this dark cell
forgotten by the woman whom I still love
if I think about it again I am speechless
and pain saddens my heart)

*Amo la notte salutar
il passo della sentinella
amo la luna contemplar
quando rischiara la mia cella
ma quando penso all' avvenir
alla mia libertà perduta*

I love greeting at night
the steps of the sentinel
I love contemplating the moon
when it brightens my cell
but when I think about the future
and about my lost freedom

*vorrei baciarla e poi morir
mentr'ella dorme all' insaputa*

I would like to kiss her and then die
while she sleeps unknowingly)

While it is entirely possible that Marisa did indeed see the moon or an electric light that night in the cell, her choice to convey this detail as a key narrative element of her entrance in the cell serves the important purpose of locating her within the known and imagined landscape of prison. Other aspects of Marisa's experience, her thoughts about her political activities, the more specific look of her prison cell, a discussion of her fears for herself and her brother, are neglected in order for her story to better conform to shared imagery of what a prison cell is like. The choice to fit herself into

see '1500 detenuti in rivolta alle Carceri "Nuove"', *La Nuova Stampa*, 27 December 1945, p.2 and the follow up articles on the 28, 29, 30 December 1945.

this type of imagined landscape also emphasizes the heroic aspect of her experience, and makes her more explicitly seem like the heroine of an adventure novel or a film.

Many of my informants from later time periods reported encountering expressions of reassurance upon entering their cells. Giorgio Zanini, for example, was taken to prison in 1969 after he was badly beaten by the police after a demonstration in the centre of Turin. He came in drenched in rain and his own blood, desperate, and the first thing his cellmates did was to offer him coffee and some warm clothes. Unlike Marisa Scala who had to wait for the morning alone and was unable to sleep, Zanini was immediately put to bed by his cellmates. They told him to sleep and to recover from his blows and they explained that when he felt like it he could begin to abide by the rules they had set up in the cell: 'One has to make white coffee in the morning, another has to wash the dishes, another has to wash the bathroom- well not quite a bathroom but what was there basically'. These rules, which other inmates also talked about, were set up for the basic functioning of the cell as a communal lived space. In the cell Zanini said he found 'an atmosphere that was I should say joyous, they tried to make the time pass, they were young guys, one of the rules was not to ask anything, if they want to tell you something they will tell you, otherwise they were all innocent'. So the impact of coming into a prison cell was not as tragic and dramatic as Zanini had expected because his cellmates were very friendly and kind to him and he was quick to understand the hidden rules of prison social engagement.

These few arrivals should speak of many different layers in Le Nuove, from the unknown man from the song about Le Nuove who felt the blood leave his face as he contemplated the corridor before him, to Marisa Scala's night-time arrival during the war, to Zanini dealing with the shock of police repression in 1969, to the political prisoners of the 1970s and their impressions of the prison as a marketplace, to many others in the years to follow. These voices are not meant to be representative but to lead us in a mental journey to the same space where these different layers of time coexist, like invisible layers of paint. These voices talk about first nights, first days, the first glance at the place, which would come to be a temporary home.

HOME

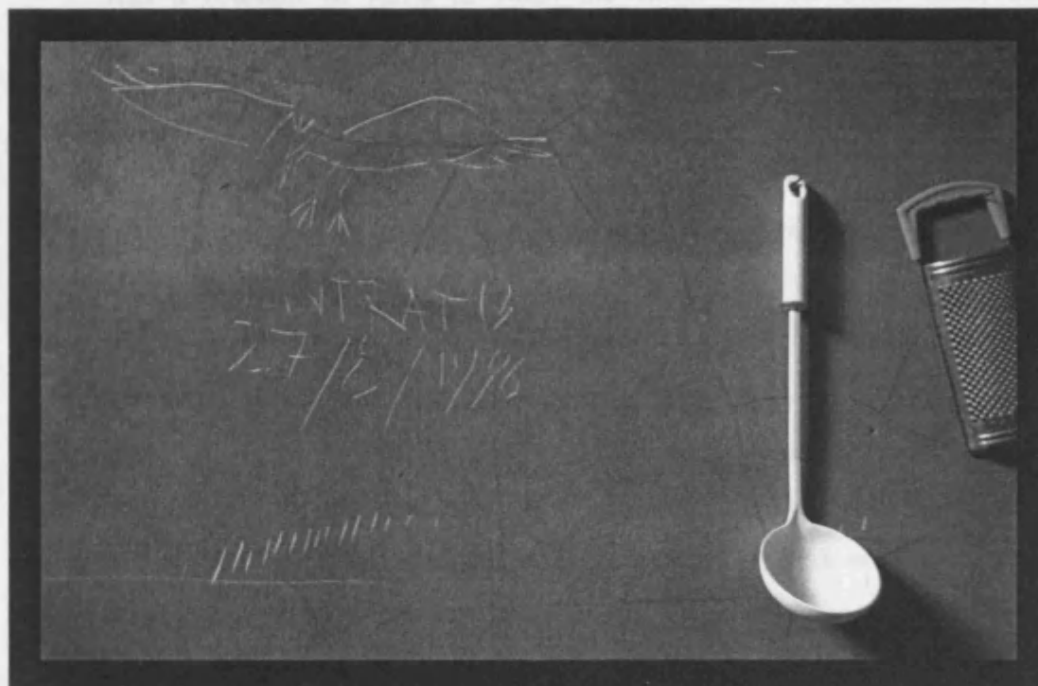


Fig.3-Graffiti and cooking utensils left in a cell. Photo courtesy of Chiara Dalmaviva

*Ah che bello o' caffè!
pure in carcere lo sanno fà
co'a ricetta c'a Ciccirinella
compagno di cella
c'ha dato mamma*

Oh how nice coffee is!
even in prison they know how to make it
with the recipe that was given to Ciccirinella,
my cellmate, by his mama

- Fabrizio de Andrè¹⁰⁴

The prison cell was not only a site of punishment but also the place where inmates could feel relaxed, where in certain periods they ate and cooked their meals, played games and had coffee. One of my informants, F.R., corrected me when I asked him about his cell; he said 'well actually the modern inmate calls it room, not cell'. This change points to inmates' constant effort at making the cell feel like a home. F.R.'s word 'modern' aimed at separating the contemporary experience of incarceration from the older more brutal associations one may have with prison, when a 'cell' was something dark, cold and Spartan.

Luca Nicolotti began talking about his cell (in spite of F.R.'s correction he used the term cell) in these terms:

¹⁰⁴ From the song *Don Raffae* about the prison Poggioreale in Naples.

The cell had a very precise internal organization: there was one who was in charge of cooking, another who helped him and washed the dishes, plus there was a rotation in turns to wash the floor. On the other hand the cell functioned as a home. In the afternoon if you felt like it you played cards, or if you felt like hanging out you could stroll down the corridor, you would go to your cell to make yourself coffee, it's the place in which you are able to build yourself greater intimacy.

Nicolotti contrasted the discipline and routine of cell maintenance with its other function of 'home', the place where you could relax and feel a greater degree of intimacy. This intimacy was of course constantly curtailed by conditions in prison, by the scheduled routine inmates had to live by, by the constant presence of guards, a presence that had to be ignored and worked around in order to make the living space more private. Incidentally, none of my informants talked about their guards as individuals (except for those talking about the nuns) other than when asked directly about them.

Mauro Salmoira also talked about the cell as a kind of home:

In every cell there are pots. One cooks food in the bathroom, narrow and long where at the end there is the Turkish toilet and the work bench with everything that we buy, it's a small little house. In certain moments it almost gives you the impression of being at boarding school or rather a military school, a place like that...If you don't pay attention to the fact that there are bars, that they close you in there, if you feel at ease with people, if there is friendship, sometimes time flies by...once we played Risk until eight in the morning, anyway you have time there, it's not like you have to get up and go to work! (he laughs).

Most of the inmates I interviewed had stories of that kind, of social moments in which they forgot where they were and simply had fun. Giorgio Zanini laughed as he told me some of the jokes he had learned from his cell-mates; F.R. talked about convincing his cell mates to watch *The Blues Brothers* which brought him pleasure and prestige since the film was a great success with his cellmates; Anna Cherchi talked about coming back from her time outside for air with a group of female inmates who were laughing and joking with her when they were interrupted by an old bitter nun who yelled out 'We are not in Porta Palazzo¹⁰⁵ here!' a dynamic which could easily have occurred outside, in school or in church.

¹⁰⁵ Porta Palazzo is the main market square in Turin where people are known to yell and scream to sell their merchandise and where 'bad manners' and 'bad people' supposedly congregated. The nun was saying this in 1944 but the expression is still common today.

The vast majority of the memories and incidents of ease and intimacy reported by my informants and relating to the prison cell, however, revolved around meals. Food in general (both in negative and positive terms) played an enormous part of my inmates' recollections of prison and it is therefore worth exploring in greater depth. That food plays a central role in prison is not surprising and is a fact well recognized in prison literature. Catrin Smith, for example, writes that:

In prison food assumes enormous importance, symbolically representing (...) the prison experience. In outside society dietary habits serve to establish and symbolize control over one's body. In prison that control is taken away as the prisoners and their bodies become the objects of external forces. Eating choices and preferences are restricted and the bodily experience of eating becomes mediated and controlled.¹⁰⁶

All inmates agreed that in Le Nuove food provided by the institution was inedible. Patrizio Peci, who was the head of the Turin wing of the Red Brigades (and later became Italy's first 'pentito', denouncing his comrades in exchange for reduced sentencing) summed up his description of Le Nuove in these terms: 'a horrible prison, extremely old, where the food is inedible and everything is decrepit'.¹⁰⁷ After the prison reform of 1975, inmates were officially allowed to cook in their cells so the institution could only restrict the raw materials at inmate disposal, though authorities could always and indiscriminately deprive individual inmates of the right to cook in their cells, something that occurred quite often, as punishment. The prison authorities also controlled the time of meals and could regulate whether inmates could visit each other in their cells. They also kept track of these visits on catalogues, which can still be found in the prison archive.¹⁰⁸ These records presented a map of alliances and relationships, which could serve as useful information for maintaining further control of the prison in potentially troubled times.

When Adriana Garizio began telling me about what life was like in prison she said:

The prison environment works according to fixed deadlines, in other words, the meals schedule: in the morning they give you breakfast, at lunch they bring you lunch and in the evening they give you dinner. There are some

¹⁰⁶ Catrin, Smith, 'Punishment and pleasure: women, food and the imprisoned body', *The Sociological Review* (2002) p.202.

¹⁰⁷ Patrizio Peci, *Io l'infame*, Mondadori, Milan, 1983, p.192.

¹⁰⁸ See for example notebook on meals in box 4018 'domandine detenuti 1956-1979' in fund Casa Circondariale di Torino detta 'Le Nuove', in the State Archive in Turin.

possibilities like you could ask for a meal without sauce, with raw vegetables instead of cooked ones, it's something you might feel more comfortable with...you could also receive packages from outside, from your relatives.

Adriana did not list the other internal rhythms such as wake up or lights out time, but rather she saw mealtime as the central determinant of time in prison. She listed the options that the prison gave inmates regarding their food; she then went on to talk about how she and her friends would buy food from the prison shop and cook for themselves, although this freedom was always restricted. She complained: 'the hardest thing was being dependent. In other words having to ask for everything, for example (...) if you wanted to have a good bottle of wine we were allowed to buy it but this wine was held by the female guards in a little cage, we were dependant for everything through the notorious *domandine*'.¹⁰⁹ The experience of eating was thus always mediated and controlled by authorities at some level, just as Catrin Smith suggested.

Susanna Ronconi recalled:

For me my relationship with food was always very important and it was one of the things that I tried to use to (laughs) stay normal. In fact one of the things that made me suffer the most in the special prison was when they took away the little stove for us to cook and we were forced to eat what the prison passed on to us.

Cooking allowed prisoners to feel that they were in control, at least of that aspect of their body. Food could be 'used' as a way to care for oneself but it certainly was also a sphere in which infringement on the part of institutional authorities felt most like a violation and had painful consequences for inmates.

One of the deepest memories of violation besides the times in which inmates were deprived of the right to cook, was when food sent by relatives was given to inmates damaged by guard intervention. Mauro Salmoira recalled:

The things that arrive from home are always things that come from home (...) and of course you share them, it would be an affront not to share it. So the nice thing was when food came, the bad thing was when you opened it up and maybe there was a timbale and it arrived all chopped up or a salami

¹⁰⁹ This term 'famose' which I have translated as 'notorious', suggests that 'domandine' - the requests inmates had to fill out on bureaucratic forms for anything they required - were such a constant of prison life as to become a cliché, 'famous' because talked about so often. These 'request forms' were highly hated by inmates since they were seen as infantilising and as a very bureaucratic part of their life in prison.

cut all over the place to see that there was nothing inside. It's awful that they put their hands on it!

The damage done to food coming from home interrupted the pleasure of sharing food with cellmates. It was a visual and physical reminder of one's condition as an inmate, in which the institution, which made the direct contact between home and cell impossible, mediated everything. David Sutton, in *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory*, argues that: 'food sent from home constitutes a symbolic process of restoring the fragmented world of the displaced through reconstructing the sensory totality of the world of home'.¹¹⁰ Prison authorities would thus deliberately interrupt the process of restoring the home; symbolically interfering with efforts of loved ones to connect with their captive children/lovers/friends through the sensory exchange of food from home.

Mauro Salmoira talked about the rituals of food sharing in prison:

It happens that we are used to socialize every day around food so also inside prison you organize dinner, so something we did normally was to go do the shopping and then prepare the food, and we cooked well because we had plenty of time (laughs)...Then there is the ritual, really a ritual (...) of the well-made sauce and the ritual of the materials you had to use to make it, because, for example, inside you don't have knives but you have plastic knives, and to cut garlic finely with a plastic knife is hard but you can do it. After a while you get very good at doing those things! So there is the ritual of the meal (...) it's something that absorbs everyone and unites you!

The ritual of planning and preparation served a constitutive purpose and helped create a sense of unity and pleasure within a context in which sociality was greatly limited and strained. Food preparation was a challenge, a way of setting oneself goals but also of defeating the institution's limitations: even without a proper knife inmates would learn how to cut garlic to produce a meal just as good as one from the outside.

Food was not the only exchange between the outside home and the prison home. Inmates were allowed to send their dirty laundry away with their visiting relatives. The laundry would then be returned washed and drenched in the familiar and comforting smell of home. The home laundry briefly cleansed the inmate of the stench of the prison cell. This cleansing was also traumatic because it reminded inmates of their distance from home and further emphasized the squalor of their

¹¹⁰ David Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts- An Anthropology of Food and Memory*, Berg, Oxford, 2001 paraphrased in an article by Elia Petridou, 'The Taste of Home' pp. 86-106 in *Home Possessions*, p.89.

surrounding. In a censored letter to a fellow prisoner (a woman), N.V. suggests that they 'exchange bathrobes'.¹¹¹ Such an exchange was a way of trading in bodily smells. The smell of a loved one, arousing and comforting, could provide a temporary escape both from the smell of the prison and from its numbing desexualising force.

Sex is a topic addressed widely in literature about prisons¹¹² as well as in visual representations of prison, be they cinematic¹¹³ or photographic.¹¹⁴ Especially for those who left partners on the outside world, the prison came to interrupt not only the daily loving interaction between partners but also their sex life which was left to be mediated through letters and the minimal physical contact allowed in visits. As in the case of all leisurely activities within the context of the prison cell, the potentially positive, relaxing, homely and intimate aspect of sexuality can be counter-posed to the potential violence, danger and power struggles which make prison a threatening place and the antithesis of home. Sex, like food or coffee, is described in prison literature as a means of consolidating relations and establishing a layer of protection around an inmate. It is also, more rarely, used as an element of coercion and oppression by prisoners as well as by guards. I was unable to ascertain whether violent sexual behaviour occurred in Le Nuove from the information provided to me by my informants, though there were hints of this occurring in Le Nuove in some of the accounts provided in Emilio Quadrelli's book *Andare ai resti*.¹¹⁵ Sex, like violence, was a fairly taboo topic for my informants. I shall therefore limit my discussion to the themes relating to sexuality, which emerged from my interviews,

¹¹¹ Letter from N. V. to M.R. (names have been omitted for privacy reasons), 12 September 1979, in box 4977-4978, 'documentazione varia da inserire nei fascicoli 1979' in fondo Casa Circondariale 'Le Nuove' di Torino, State Archive, Turin.

¹¹² See for example some of the accounts about sex in Karel Weiss (ed.), *The Prison Experience- An Anthology*, Delacorte Press, New York, 1976. Or Alice Propper, *Prison Homosexuality: Myth and Reality*, Lexington Books, Lexington, MA., 1981.

¹¹³ See for example the film by Marco Risi, *Mery per sempre* (Italy, 1989) about juvenile delinquents. Or the more brutal example of rape in prison presented in the Hollywood film directed by Tony Kaye, *American History X* (USA, 1998).

¹¹⁴ See for example Ethan Hoffman and John McCoy, *Concrete Mama: Prison Profiles from Walla Walla*, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, 1981.

¹¹⁵ Emilio Quadrelli, *Andare ai resti: Banditi, rapinatori, guerriglieri nell'Italia degli anni settanta*, DeriveApprodi, Rome, 2004, pp. 64-78 in particular on conditions in female prisons in the 1970s, Le Nuove included amongst them.

well aware that my role as an outside interviewer was not particularly conducive to discussing these deeply private matters.

Few of my informants talked explicitly about sex in prison. The silence over sex in prison may be due to the taboo nature of the topic, to its highly personal nature, or to a repression connected to the pain of sexual deprivation and of its substitutes in prison. Susanna Ronconi, however, talked about sex in the context of the female section. Ronconi immediately identified the coexistence of two different approaches to sex in prison, a 'tender' approach and an approach, which envisioned sex as a tool for asserting power, one that she saw as a deeply sexist way of relating to sexuality. She said that while there were actually love relationships between women in which couple-relations were natural (and she assumed came from a pre-existing lesbian predisposition from outside) there was also a lesbian sexuality discovered in prison and a function of the prison environment. To her these relations were crafted by the:

Worse sexist baggage one could imagine. This was something that always struck me very negatively, which I never liked and I was never able to look on with acceptance. One was the slave of the other 'go get me this...' perhaps not violent in physical terms but 'don't look at that one' extremely strong jealousies, 'if I tell you to stay here you have to stay here', 'cook!'...I am not saying that this was the rule. (...) There were also very tender relations, so actually this is an aspect which for many women was fundamental to being able to stand the prison...but in other cases there was this inmate culture which is a very sexist culture, which is a culture of power and also a culture of violence.

Ronconi talked about having tender relations with her companions who were also members of Prima Linea but she preferred to keep the discussion more general and focused on others. Sex was presented as something which could help women 'stand' conditions in prison and this had a practical, physical function which according to Ronconi did not correspond, except in rare cases, to the broader psychological function of 'love'.

Letters were outlets for feelings, and channels for expressing sexual thoughts and desires towards one's partner, although inmates were always aware of the presence of censors. Susanna Ronconi and her husband wrote each other a letter a day through the internal mail and the director of the prison once joked with them that he was learning a lot about love through their letters. Ronconi said: 'I knew that the

prison director read our writings directly (...) but at a certain point I decided not to give a damn about it because if not it became something...you cannot go on and on for years communicating in a false voice'. If inmates wanted to maintain their relations 'true' they would have to ignore the presence of prison authorities.

This leads me to discuss a very strong myth from the 1970s concerning one of the leaders of the Red Brigades Renato Curcio and his companion, Nadia Mantovani. This incident was told to me on several occasions and by different people, from prison guards to prison administrators, and it had a special appeal both because it concerned the very well known and charismatic figure of Renato Curcio and because of its scandal appeal. According to an account provided by H., Renato Curcio and Nadia Mantovani would tell the guard to turn away while they were having their internal meetings, when they were both held in Le Nuove. They would threaten the guard by telling him: 'turn around little boy or tonight you will find yourself in the river' and they would have sex on the table of the visiting room. In this account Curcio and Mantovani reduce the guard to a little child who is not supposed to see grown-ups engaging in sexual activities, for his own good. It marks Curcio and Mantovani as determined in their intent to have sex and confident about their power to break prison rules. The incident may never have occurred, but it is part of a larger mythology of the power of the Red Brigades in prison, which is continually used to portray the *anni di piombo* as a mysterious and exciting time. It is also a story meant to convey how un-ashamed the terrorists were, perhaps immoral and sexually liberated in a voracious and dangerous way. This story is always told the way one would tell a dirty joke, with a grin and a whisper.¹¹⁶

Whether the event occurred or is just a fantasy, its appeal points to two main features of sexuality in prison: first of all it presumes a 'looking away' of the guards which cannot be quite complete, so that even a figure of the presumed internal power and threatening resources of Curcio could not get the guard to leave the room but could only threaten him into looking away; secondly, when it is revealed, sexuality in prison is presented in laughable terms by those holding authority in the prison. Perhaps this laughter stems from an embarrassment at finding themselves in a position to be able to look onto individuals' very private matters, so humour might be a way of coping with that discomfort.

¹¹⁶ From interviews with Vincenzo Cappelletto and Riccardo Contini.

A final incident of ‘sexuality revealed’, which became a matter for jokes and laughter, was an account given to me by the wife of a prison administrator, who briefly also worked as a prison guard herself, I shall call her W. While we were making small talk after my interview just before I left their flat she turned to her husband and asked him if he had told me about what they had found during a search...Her husband laughed and said ‘no, you tell her!’ She said that the guards and a group of nuns had gone into the female section of the prison, and that while they did not find the knives they had been looking for, they found large penis-shaped structures, made of bread and glue. W. laughed extremely hard as she told the story and she said that the women were real artists and must have used them to decorate their rooms. It wasn’t clear to me whether she made that last remark as a way of feigning naiveté or whether she sincerely thought the dildos were used as decoration; either way her laughter and embarrassment, but also her clear eagerness to tell me the story stemmed from the uncomfortable power of revealing the private and sexual through the routine work of the prison.

During interviews I found there were patterns in my informants’ narratives relating to their cell. When recounting their memories of the cell, for example, inmates usually began with a physical description which was limited to the furniture and structures provided by the institution. One exception is an account provided by Zanini of an elaborate system devised by inmates to try to stay warm:

It was cold. One of the ways they had of staying warm was an electric heater which they had built on their own, getting themselves some electrical resistances, the ones with the spiral, through the hidden channels that exist in prison. And they had a brick full of holes and they had wrapped the electrical resistances around it, it became like a little heater and then they attached two cables to it and connected them to the light bulb cable in the cell. They made this thing run along the wall and they covered it with paint so that you couldn’t see it. (...) So it would come on with the light. If they heard the guards coming they would pull the cable, stick it under a cot and that’s how they would stay warm.

Inmates could sometimes work hard to make material improvements for themselves in the cell and they could do so through the informal commercial channels, which existed within the prison. Strangely though, Zanini’s account of this ‘home improvement’ was one of the only accounts of ways that inmates tried to transform

their cells (and it may be significant that he only spent three days in prison). None of my informants ever talked about decorating the cell or about any of the personal possessions they had there. In one case F.R. told me that there was no point in decorating his cell, when I asked him explicitly if he did anything to change the room when he arrived: 'what would you want to decorate? The people there were tough, there were pictures of naked women on the wall, a classic, and nobody gave a shit'. To decorate would have meant exposing himself in the eyes of his cellmates who already considered him at the bottom of the prison's hierarchy since he was a drug addict. The only personal contribution inmates discuss freely and happily is their relationship with food, which is by its very nature an ephemeral contribution. While inmates were constantly seeking comfort and some level of tranquillity and protection in the cell, there is also a clear sense that they rejected the domesticity of the cell, at least in memory.

The cell was a problematic home space whose structure affected and thwarted the lives of its inhabitants. In memory the cell appears as an agent whose very presence absorbed and erased any personal contribution inmates might have made to it. An inmates' limited time inside the cell, compared to the longer institutional time, which marked the cell and made it 'decrepit', 'run down' and 'rotten' affected the way inmates experienced the space and how they lived their presence in it. As Daniel Miller wrote in *Home Possessions, Material Culture Behind Closed Doors*: 'If the house is accepted as something that reflects a long term set of historical processes, then any present occupant has to contend not only with the agency of the previous occupants but increasingly with the house itself as an agent'.¹¹⁷ I shall return to the ways the longer historical lifetime of the cell gave it agency, as well as to the theme of haunting, in the section on breakdowns. For the moment, let us just note that in their recollections of the prison cell, inmates only described their cells, as they were when they found them, empty, and they did not talk about the various objects and decorations that they may have used to fill them. When visiting the cells today we are deprived of those visual and material clues, which would have provided invaluable insight into how inmates worked to make their cell space into home

¹¹⁷ Daniel Miller (ed.), *Home Possessions*, p.10.

space.¹¹⁸ That they themselves do not choose to recount this is a sign of an obviously complicated relationship to that space.

It was (and apparently still is) a tradition in prison that when an inmate left for the outside world he would give his cellmates all of his possessions. This tradition probably developed out of a real financial need, and out of the assumption that those going on the outside could procure their own practical implements and clothes, which inmates badly needed and could not easily obtain on the inside. Renato Curcio wrote about this as a prison fantasy by which inmates would tell themselves:

When I leave prison (...) I will bring with me only myself. Not my clothes and all the rest. They belong to the past and they must fall off like the leaves in autumn.' (...) And so things would be left behind, but, so as not to offend the sensibility of those who were to inherit them, those who left it told the others and himself: I do not want to take these memories with me. As if the memories were in those poor rags, in those objects and not instead in the flesh, in the soul, in dreams. In the emptiness of the abandoned cells.¹¹⁹

Perhaps the absence of any description of objects and personal contributions to the cell in the accounts of my informants reflects a deeper abandonment and sorting out of material things and memories that occurred at the time they left prison. In his article on 'The Refurbishment of Memory' Jean-Sebastien Marcoux wrote that: 'Considering that things embody relations and memory (...) and that memory is selective, it follows almost logically that the sorting out of things becomes a metaphor for the sorting out of relations and memories'.¹²⁰ When leaving prison inmates would detach from all of their possessions, abandoning them to their cellmates, and disowning the cell as their home space. Those memories of time spent in the cell could be left behind with those still there, as the person leaving no longer had any use for them. Marcoux suggests that 'people may get separated from some things precisely because these are too important, because the memories are cumbersome'.¹²¹ Thus detachment from the material connections to the prison cell could be seen as a way of also relieving oneself from the burdens of memory.

¹¹⁸ For a discussion of the use of deodorants and cleaning products in cell decorations in contemporary Britain see: Leonard Baer, 'Visual Imprints on the Prison Landscape: A Study of the Decorations in Prison Cells', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*-vol. 96 (2005) no.2, pp. 209-217.

¹¹⁹ Curcio, *La soglia*, *ibid.* p.59.

¹²⁰ Jean-Sebastien Marcoux, 'The Refurbishment of Memory,' *Home Possessions*, *ibid.* pp.69-86, 83.

¹²¹ Marcoux, *Home Possessions*, *ibid.* p.81.

Years after leaving his cell, F.R. recalled: 'when I left I remember that I gave away practically everything that I had because, you know, there was the tradition that when you leave you leave all your things to your cellmates. My jeans, but also my shoes, my tracksuit, I left with just one set of clothes but I was happy that way, I didn't give a shit.' In F.R.'s account 'not giving a shit' corresponded to not turning back, forgetting the cell and those living in there and focusing again on himself (and in his case on immediately finding a way to do heroin again). As Marcoux wrote about moving (which applies also to leaving objects behind in moving out of the cell) it 'becomes a means for defining oneself as a subject among the material world. It becomes a means for people to define themselves via the transformation of the material structures in which they are intimately subject'.¹²² To F.R. abandoning his things was a way of respecting prison tradition, of feeling lighter, but perhaps also of putting away the 'lessons' he was expected to learn from imprisonment. He describes himself as not 'giving a shit' about his things but perhaps he also meant about prison in general, which he soon returned to.

Self-definitions also emerged from inmates' ability to negotiate and adjust the materiality of prison to personal needs, while still in prison. Susanna Ronconi prided herself over her ritual of the aperitivo. She said:

I am one who has a cult of the aperitivo, still now, also when I was young, since forever. So my girlfriends make fun of me, they still make fun of me now because they remember me at the gate, also when we were in the special prisons, at the gate of the cell around 7:30 with a glass of wine and if you could buy them, OLIVES!!! I skipped only when I was in isolation or in security cells, for the rest I don't think I missed an aperitivo in ten years!

For Susanna this 'cult of the aperitivo' served an important function in her self-definition and self-presentation in prison. It constituted an element of continuity between her pre-prison self, her self in prison and who she is today, a ritual, which she is proud to say the prison authorities only managed to take away from her during the strictest times. This continuity probably also helped her use the aperitivo as a way of pretending, at least once a day, that she wasn't really in prison, but outside, and it constituted an elaborate and personal form of resistance. Not only did she manage to have an aperitivo every day for ten years of incarceration, but she was able to do it properly, through the material signifiers of aperitivo, including olives.

¹²² Marcoux, 'The Refurbishment of Memory', *ibid.* p.84.

Two main consumption goods played a special role in prison and are almost emblematic of the prison experience: coffee and cigarettes. It would be possible to write an entire cultural study centered on the meaning and consumption of coffee in Italy. It is reasonable to say, however, that coffee, on the outside, as well as inside prison, is used as a means to establish and consolidate alliances, or at least to express a relationship of benevolence. To 'go get a coffee' together can mark the beginning of a friendship but it can also be a way of solving conflicts, of suggesting 'I don't like you much but let's go get a coffee together and talk things over'. While coffee can and is very much consumed on the outside, when located in the home it is the ultimate signifier of domesticity, and to invite somebody to coffee in one's home is a gesture of respect as well as marking the beginning of a potential intimacy. When the home is a prison cell this positive exchange around coffee takes on an even stronger dimension because it is structured in opposition to the very unpleasant and threatening background of the prison.

Mauro Salmoira recalls that:

The first thing you do when somebody new arrives in a cell is to make coffee if a person likes to drink it, otherwise you offer them food because it is a gesture that says 'I am offering you something' right? Or food because maybe somebody has arrived and maybe they were on a trip that lasted hours and hours and they didn't eat or drink shit so you give it to them.

Coffee was used immediately as a gesture of welcome and benevolence, a way of taking care of those who arrived in their cell perhaps exhausted and in shock. This offer of coffee was not only altruistic but it was also aimed at making sure that the new element was immediately absorbed into the domestic sphere of the cell in a positive way. This was a step towards avoiding future conflict and a buffer against the fear that might come from having a stranger included into such a cramped and delicate space.

Coffee was also a means of negotiating benevolent feelings between inmates and guards. Several guards talked about meeting inmates on the outside and being offered coffee; to them this was a sign that the inmates respected them and the gesture was something they were proud to report.¹²³ Guards and prison workers also prided themselves on having had coffee with famous inmates such as Renato

¹²³ Based on interviews with Carmelo Parente, Teodoro Romano, Ispettore Farina.

Curcio, Adriano Sofri,¹²⁴ or the bandit Cavallero,¹²⁵ and they used this as proof of a special relationship, which added prestige to the prison worker implying the respect of the famous person.¹²⁶ Marisa Scala also talked about a positive exchange revolving around coffee between herself and the head of the prison nuns, Sister Giuseppina, who ran the female section of the prison during the war. She said:

As soon as they took me to the prison the only nice thing was that the Germans brought me to the mother superior's office and she would tell me, at that point they didn't call me by my first name but by my last, Scala, 'would you like a little drop of coffee?' and I would answer 'if it was coffee mother superior, but that disgusting thing that you drink...' 'I give you what the lord passes on to me' and that was it, then I went back to my cell.

For Marisa this was a valuable exchange, the 'only nice thing' that happened to her during the time that she was held in Le Nuove by the Germans. The story, which Marisa told with long pauses and with a big smile on her face, clearly reveals something much more important than refusing a drop of coffee. The story was about an exchange, an offer, which involved both care and respect on the part of the nun. The exchange, which occurred every time Marisa was brought back to prison after her interrogation was about the 'non-coffee' quality of the coffee the nun could offer Marisa. Her refusal, which Marisa couched as a joke, was essentially a complaint about the situation she was in, about the war and German occupation and about her particular condition as prisoner. The nun's answer implied a recognition of these difficult conditions and was an apology for not being able to do much about them. To Marisa these exchanges around coffee were important both because they gave her

¹²⁴ Leader of the extra-parliamentary group *Lotta Continua*-continuous struggle. Accused of plotting to murder Luigi Calabresi the police officer who was held responsible by Lotta Continua for the mysterious death of the Anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli who allegedly 'fell' out of a window in a police station in Milan while he was being questioned about the bomb attacks in Piazza Fontana in 1969. Calabresi was murdered on 17 May 1972 and Adriano Sofri was put in prison based on the testimony of a single 'pentito', Salvatore Marino. He has thus far served 22 years in prison and was only recently released on grounds of poor health. Debates raged over the years, spawning several books and newspaper editorials by Sofri and others over whether he should receive clemency.

¹²⁵ Part of the 'Banda Cavallero', which conducted robberies in banks in Milan and Turin between 1963 and 1967. He gained notoriety as representing a new brand of criminal, the member of the 'batterie' who chose the criminal route for reasons other than financial gain, supposedly to rebel for rebellion's sake (see Emilio Quadrelli, *Andare ai resti*, ibid. for a discussion of the significance of this new type of criminality in the 1970s). Once in prison he and one of his fellow robbers, Sante Notarnicola, famously argued that their crime had revolutionary and ideological causes and they thus became icons for branches of the radical left in Italy. They were condemned to life in prison and Cavallero later became very religious and repented for his crime. A famous film by Carlo Lizzani, *Banditi a Milano* (Italy, 1968) further contributed to the bandits' legendary fame. See also Fabio Finazzi, *Fratello Lupo: un francescano tra gli ergastolani*, Edizioni Paoline, Turin, 2004.

¹²⁶ See interviews with Carmelo Parente and the Ragionier Gambera.

a sense of agency-she refused the nun's coffee- and because they also involved a gesture of solidarity on the part of the nun who could not help her but perhaps wished that she could.

Making coffee, as a ritual involving a certain familiar set of movements and requiring focused time while waiting for it to be ready, was at once a re-enactment of familiar outside behavior and a way of making prison time go by faster. Coffee was an essential coping mechanism in prison. The smell of coffee also evoked the smell of home kitchens and bars on the outside and was strong enough to cover up the almost overpowering smell of prison, with a smell that was comforting and associated with leisure.

While coffee worked in prison as a hidden signifier of alliances, cigarettes served a much more practical function; in the prison economy they were the unit of currency, which replaced money, that was forbidden.¹²⁷ Giorgio Zanini recalls:

There was a whole traffic of buying and selling, and of business deals which I don't mean to say were dodgy but strange, I don't really know what was going on. The currency was not money but it was cigarettes so if you wanted to buy yourself a coffee machine, the coffee machine was worth I don't know how many packets of Nazionali (...) everybody smoked.

Smoking in prison, when lighting a cigarette was directly equal to burning money, was a highly ritualized event with its very particular rules. Mauro Salmoira talked about how when he first arrived in prison he was asked for a light while he was smoking a cigarette. He handed over his lit cigarette but was told: 'be careful because that can seem like an affront, you have to light another person's cigarette with a lighter.' A gesture that would have seemed normal on the outside was considered an affront in prison, where smoking had to be performed according to fixed rules. If somebody asked for a light, he was also asking to be shown respect through a 'proper' performance of giving a light. Luca Nicolotti remarked that there are many more smokers in prison and that this was not only a question of the generally lower class of inmates. He said that cigarettes helped structure time and gave the illusion of it passing faster, while it also promoted social exchanges.

¹²⁷ Unfortunately I was not able to assess how far back this practice went. There is no explicit reference to the use of tobacco in prison regulations. There did not seem to be trade in cigarettes in the female section of the prison during the war and my male informants from the war were held in the German section of the prison where they were not allowed access to the broader prison. It is safe to say that the internal trade in cigarettes goes back at least to the immediate post-war years.

Food, coffee and cigarettes all worked at once as signifiers of home and relaxation and as ways of establishing contacts within the prison which would make life there more comfortable. Their other main function was helping to make time pass, a point which deserves a section of its own.

PRISON TIME: Political Prisoners and Heterotopia/Heterochrony

*Delle vostre galere un giorno
un buon uso sapremo far,
prima apriremo le porte agli schiavi*

*li accoglieremo nell'umanità
e dopo in fila uno per uno
vi metteremo tutti là
il tribunale del proletariato
i vostri delitti dovrà giudicar...*

One day we will make good use
of your prisons,
first we will open the doors to the slaves

we will greet them into humanity
And then we will put you all there
lined up one after the other
The tribunal of the proletariat
will have to judge your crimes

-Alfredo Bandelli¹²⁸

For Foucault heterotopia 'begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time'.¹²⁹ In prison this break is immediate and drastic. As soon as inmates are taken into their cells they must face the radical interruption of the linear sequence of time outside, be it time at work or with family, and they must submit to the extremely regimented time of prison. Besides breaking with their normal lives, inmates also experience a break with the future, especially if they are facing long sentences.

This section on time will focus primarily on the memories of political prisoners held in Le Nuove during the 1970s because during their time in prison political developments on the outside as well as in prison and in the courtrooms made the break in time for them particularly compelling. These political prisoners entered prison when revolution was not only hoped for, but expected not only by political prisoners but also by a large section of the Italian left. They left prison after the assassination of Aldo Moro and the march of the 40,000¹³⁰ - two events which arguably represented the end of a period of radical social movements that shook

¹²⁸ Alfredo Bandelli, *Fabbrica, Galera, Piazza*, 1974- see full transcription in riot chapter.

¹²⁹ Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', *ibid.* p. 25.

¹³⁰ A demonstration of white collar workers to end the strikes of their colleagues in Fiat, which took place on 14 October 1980. This event was largely seen to have marked the end of the labour movement, which dominated factory and political life with protests and strikes throughout the 1970s.

Italy from 1968 to 1980. This sense of rupture emerged quite clearly from my informants' accounts and from their interpretation of the ways they approached their time in prison, as well as in their description of their personal journeys, which they saw as having deeply transformed them.

When the political prisoners I interviewed first went to prison starting in the mid 1970s, they did so as members of a band and they noted that this affected how they organized their time as well as how they approached other prisoners. Luca Nicolotti recalled that: 'The way we were in those years our relations with common criminals were always very band-like relations i.e. 'we ten brigadists together with you from...let's see what we can do to escape, to raise havoc...so it was a kind of inter-grouping'. Mauro Salmoira also talks about the first period of incarceration in terms of in-grouping: 'In the period that I was in jail we were all together, they always put us all together and so we had our little society within a society'. This society within a society helped organize time in prison according to agendas, which worked on a different watch than that of the prison. It was in these groups that prison riots were planned and organized and where the balance of power in prison was re-distributed among inmates. More importantly, these groups provided an arena for political discussion and personal education which were not provided by the prison at the time and which were deeply empowering to inmates.¹³¹

Susanna Ronconi claimed she was never bored in prison:

Something, which I absolutely do not recall of my experience in prison, is boredom, I never got bored. I remember the loneliness of isolation, despair too, but not boredom. We...we gave ourselves(...)we had a polemic going with the women from the Red Brigades who were too Stalinist, i.e. they studied for five hours a day but we didn't...there were rules that you would impose on yourself.

Here Ronconi presented a rivalry between the women from Prima Linea, a group she belonged to, and those from the Red Brigades who were more serious in their approach to studying in prison. Studying, working on self-improvement and being in control of one's time was a way to resist the destructive boredom of prison. It was also a way to maintain a sense of a continued political life, which was what had led those women into prison in the first place. It also was a way of maintaining a group

¹³¹ Similar self-organized political schools were set in place by the ANC and other groups in South Africa, the IRA and the Ulster Volunteer Force and other groups in prisons in Northern Ireland, as well as by the Black Panthers in prisons in the United States in the same period.

identity. During that time many inmates still expected to be liberated by their comrades outside and they continued to produce political pamphlets and documents by which they imagined themselves still linked to the greater organization.¹³²

Several inmates suggested that organizing and structuring one's time in prison required a large amount of effort and self-disciplining. Adriana Garizio said:

In prison one ends up organizing another life for oneself with the people there, with the comrades, with the other women...and time passes all the same. One should not imagine an eternity of time that doesn't pass, between one thing and another 'get up, get ready, go to air time, fix something to eat, eat then either you go have social time or you go to another inmate's cell, then you go back for air. Well. You have a whole rhythm, you go back in and watch TV, read, there are lots of ways of spending time. SILENCE. The day goes by quickly then when one thinks about it later nine years are a life time! It's a question of how you structure those years.

While Adriana was describing a life highly regimented by the internal rhythms of the prison, which, for example, determined her wake-up time or air-time, she nevertheless described the ways she decided to make time pass as an active choice on her part, so that she was an active agent deciding and building a life for herself in prison.

Passing time and lost time were also predictably elements of anxiety for these prisoners. In a statement almost opposite to the one provided by Adriana Garizio above, Mauro Salmoira said that:

Inside the awful thing is time, on the spot it doesn't seem that long to you but then you realize that you are there and you can't do anything. You can forget about working, very few had a job and you risked spending twenty hours in front of the TV and you lost a will to think, to discuss things, to be critical, to absorb what was happening. You might be tempted to escape reality by trying to sleep even though there all time is regimented.

Time in prison was numbing and dangerous and one had to make enormous efforts not to fall into wasteful time and lose one's ability to think, to discuss, to stay informed. Mauro Salmoira lamented the transformation from the first years when he shared his cell with political prisoners like himself and then the later years when he

¹³² Patrizio Peci in his memoir complained about this 'mania for documents' of the Red Brigade prisoners who were still inside, p. 184. Susanna Ronconi was actually freed from prison in a very dramatic escape in the prison of Rovigo in January 1982 by her companion Sergio Segio. A recent book by Sergio Segio tells about the successful escape, Sergio Segio, *Miccia Corta*, DeriveApprodi, Rome, 2004.

was placed in cells where his cellmates refused to turn the TV off, even at night, when there was nothing on but static. As long as he was in a group with shared 'values' he could fight and keep himself alert, but left on his own with common prisoners it was much harder to escape the numbing structure of prison life.

By the early 1980s prison authorities began separating political prisoners from each other, mixing them in with common prisoners and thus reducing their strength. One inmate from Prima Linea talked about 1982 as:

The most terrible year of all, in prison and outside, for everyone. In prison it was the year in which between 'botte'-blows-, article 90, closures, censorship, we couldn't even write from prison to prison!; outside there were the last 'colpi di coda'-dying breaths- of the history of the armed struggle-aside from the fact that it was the period of tortures, of arrests with tortures, a year that marks a vertical crisis...conditions in jail are terrible (...) there was the famous code-word 'don't speak': it meant that you couldn't (...) not only were you locked in, you had nothing, you didn't have the little stove, basic goods, your cell was entirely bare, two pairs of underwear, two socks, a pair of pants but you couldn't talk between cells (...) meetings were with glass partitions.¹³³

This harsh treatment was part of a general policy to pressure political prisoners into giving up on the armed struggle and collaborating with the police. Prison transformed how individuals experienced their participation in the armed struggle and pushed individuals to want to get out and to think about the future. A website about *pentitismo*-repentance, a phenomenon whose meanings and consequences I will discuss in Chapter Four, notes:

To hard prison, or prison in general, one can resist when strong. As long as one is strong, both on the subjective level and on the level of collective identity one can resist. Only when this strength is not there, or is lessened, or disappears (...) does the technology, which induces people to tell on each other, which the prison has at its disposal, manage to reap its fruits.¹³⁴

As time went on and especially with the laws on repentance of the early 1980s the group and gang identity of political prisoners began to disintegrate. Prisoners who decided to 'dissociate' or 'repent' had to be separated from those who

¹³³ Account provided by L.T. in Patrizia Guerra (ed.), 'Identità femminile e violenza politica. Un seminario alle Carceri Nuove e alla Facoltà di Magistero di Torino', *Rivista di Storia Contemporanea*, vol.2, 1988.

¹³⁴ L'evoluzione del circuito degli speciali ed il pentitismo <http://www.noglobal.org/nato/carcere/evol.htm> (visited: 10 May 2005) quoting passages from Salvatore Verde, *Massima Sicurezza-dal carcere speciale allo stato penale*, Odradek, Rome, 2002.

remained 'irriducibili'-the unyielding die hard terrorists. These divisions meant that the type of gang practices which had characterized the behavior of political prisoners up to that time disappeared. For Luca Nicolotti this represented a positive development because it meant that he came in personal contact with ordinary inmates for the first time:

When we got to the penal section in Le Nuove we were no longer brigadists (...). Earlier we had a role as political prisoners who wanted to fight together with common inmates (...) so there was real proselytism towards the common criminal. When we arrived at the penal section in 1985 we were for all intents and purposes ex-brigadists, inmates like all the rest, we relate with the title that the others give you so if you are a political prisoner you stay a 'politico' but we no longer represent anything, we have no organization behind us, we have nothing to defend so we are free to build inter-personal relations and to start getting to know this world and to know it again for the first time.

As the political climate changed and the organizations behind inmates dissolved, so did their roles within the prison and the structures they had imposed upon themselves. Prison time was now open to them as individuals and they were free to interact with other prisoners in a new and unstructured way. Luca Nicolotti went on to get a university degree in sociology while in prison and he clearly maintained the same kind of rigor and self-discipline he had lived by when still a member of the Red Brigades. With the end of the Red Brigades on the outside, in the prison, and in his life, his discipline was now aimed at rebuilding his life and his human relations, rather than on bringing down the system. This human focus was shared by many other political prisoners who found themselves re-emerging alone from that period.

Nicolotti talked about having to rebuild his relations with family and with other people in quite bureaucratic language. He said 'I had to reconstruct my *tessuto relazionale*- 'texture of relations' and that 'I had to reconstruct twenty-three years of family texture, then I did university, the thesis, work, then I built my emotional relationship'. To Nicolotti these were all steps of a reconstruction of the self following twenty-three years in which his focus was entirely removed from these relations and needs. (These steps, incidentally, also reflect the sorts of steps encouraged by the prison bureaucracy and which make up the informal requirements for allowing reduced sentencing). Nicolotti worked hard to regain lost time, and to start to build a future for himself. He now has two small children with a woman he

married on the outside, although he is still facing several years in *semilibertà* and his latest request for pardon was rejected.

Suddenly these inmates were faced with the time they had lost, and with their lost youth, and the shock that derived from feeling oneself and the outside world deeply transformed:

The first days after I got out I went to meet a friend of mine and we were supposed to go out for drinks and I told her 'aren't we going?' and she said 'yes, of course, we are meeting up around eleven or midnight' Miii! they were rhythms that weren't like that before I went to prison and anyway for me at midnight or one I was usually asleep and had been for two or three hours, used to a rhythm of life that was always the same every day there is no difference and that night to see the murazzi¹³⁵ full of people at midnight, I remembered that place with very few people, and I thought of when I was inside, and of the impossibility of seeing that, of all the thousands of people that were outside having fun or trying to have fun but that anyway were out!

Salmoira was shocked at the new life rhythms that young people seemed to live by, which were different from those he remembered from before he went to prison. Seeing people outside at night made him feel what he had missed out on while in prison, where every night was the same, almost as though he had not been aware of it while in prison but discovered it only once he was out and he too was trying to have fun.

Another reason for anxiety derived from the recognition that time inside transformed you and that prison time was radically different from time outside. Salmoira said that being in prison made him: '...more closed, I had different feelings but a life structured by schedules that are not your own, a life made up of so much time (...) when you go out after months and years you have trouble being among people, you become more closed, more alone, and you become a bear(...) even the way you speak changes, your body language'. Here Salmoira saw the rigid prison schedule and the large amount of time that prisoners had to grapple with as the main transforming agents responsible for the difficulties inmates had to face in socializing on the outside. Salmoira sees these transformations as bodily and permanent, making the traces of time spent in prison visible on the outside, as if written on the body.

Adriana Garizio talked about her relationship with her daughters who were teenagers when she first went to prison:

¹³⁵ Literally 'bad walls', area right on the Po river in the center of Turin with a high concentration of bars and clubs.

My daughters would come visit me with my dad and when they came they were always very happy, smiley, but undoubtedly it is a relationship that gets interrupted and then has to be reconstructed. You can't come back with a phrase that my eldest daughter said to me once: 'when you left Voghera you came back home as if you had gone out just to do the shopping', maybe I didn't realize that I had this attitude which was so irritating to them, I didn't realize that nine years had passed.

Both Luca Nicolotti and Adriana Garizio found themselves having to rebuild relations after a break in time, during which entire years were literally lost to them. (In Nicolotti's case the lost years began before he was sent to prison, during the years he lived as a clandestine, moving from one place to another and constantly having to stay disguised, while he was active in the Red Brigades.) This loss of time and the strangeness of having to rebuild relations interrupted by the years in prison was not limited to political prisoners, it was experienced by all ex inmates.

One ordinary criminal whose account was transcribed by Remo Bassetti saw his experience in prison as a sort of time warp by which he found himself frozen while the rest of the world moved on.

I committed my crime when I was twenty, seven years have passed, but I have remained frozen, mentally stopped at the day of my arrest, I think it happens to everyone, one tends to eliminate the years spent here, and anyway if you don't experience life outside, how can you say that you have grown out of your twenties, and friends send me letters in which they tell me about weddings and children, like postcards sent from tropical places to those who in the meantime sleep in the cold and rain, with the image of seas of which one can't imagine the color, and not even the salt, also because it's not true that prison stimulates the imagination, it kills it, your mind folds onto worthless things for entire days, it's apathy that engulfs you, and anything you want to do you have to swim against the current and you have to be a good swimmer, but it's unlikely that those who find themselves here are.¹³⁶

In spite of this perception of prison as a time warp, when asked to remember their experiences in prison my informants all focused on some of the most pro-active moments there, on their efforts at staying alive and keeping busy. The next section will focus on the remembered menace of what could happen to inmates if they stopped 'swimming' and the fear and horror that such a possibility still evokes.

¹³⁶ Remo Bassetti, *Derelitti e delle pene: Carcere e giustizia da Kant all'indultino*, Editori Riuniti, Rome, 2003.

BREAKDOWNS

Stanotte Michè si è impiccato ad un chiodo perchè non poteva restare vent'anni in prigione lontano da te (...) vent'anni gli avevano dato, la corte decise così perchè un giorno aveva ammazzato chi voleva rubargli Marie. Lo avevano perciò condannato, vent'anni in prigione a marcir però adesso che lui si è impiccato la porta gli devono aprir...

-Fabrizio de André¹³⁷

(Last night Michè hanged himself to a nail because he could not stay in prison for 20 years away from you they had sentenced him to 20 years, the jury decided so 'cause one day he killed the man who wanted to steal his Marie. They had therefore condemned him to rot in prison 20 years but now that he has hanged himself they must open the door for him).

The cell could be a very frightening, alienating place full of angry strangers and where inmates had to come to terms with their condition and the misery of the time ahead of them. This misery and shock was part of the intended design of prisons as disciplinary spaces. As Michel Foucault discussed in his work *Discipline and Punish*, with the onset of modernity the discipline of the timetable and of life fully controlled, observed and measured, came to replace physical punishment as the state's means of punishing and restraining unruly elements.

This more insidious punishment still had an effect on prisoner bodies, which in response could develop serious conditions as a result of incarceration. These conditions had as their most extreme form a breakdown of the inmate, a breakdown, which usually occurred in the cell or as a violent refusal to return to the cell. This breakdown could take the form of desperate screaming and vandalism, self-mutilation, and, in extreme cases, suicide.

Prison authorities prepared for such eventualities from the very beginning when prisoners went through the matriculation process. The doctor, or the matriculation officer, was to tick a box establishing whether an inmate was 'at high, low or medium risk of suicide'.¹³⁸ This affected how much supervision the inmate would have and where in the prison he/she might be held. The guard's peephole was there also as a protective measure, for authorities to be able to intervene quickly if someone was about to hang him or herself, or to do oneself harm.

The first days in prison were usually considered the most dangerous, but this potential self-harm was constantly in the background and could explain why some inmates quite openly referred to their daily practices and habits as being crucial to

¹³⁷ Fabrizio de André, *La Ballata di Michè*, Il Viaggio.

¹³⁸ In addition to any folder from the matriculation office in the prison archive, see also box 2355 Register of 'great surveillance' in the fund Casa Circondariale di Torino 'Le Nuove' in the Archivio di Stato in Turin.

their ‘survival’.¹³⁹ While this could be seen as a common expression, it also clearly applies to the possibility, only averted with effort, of sinking into self-destruction and despair, facing the shock of a complete loss of meaning. Figures who were seen to have fallen behind and let themselves go were cited in whispered or horrified tones by my informants: they were those who did not bother to get dressed and get out of bed,¹⁴⁰ those who spent their days drunk and had nobody to wait for them on the outside,¹⁴¹ those who were shuffled off to psychiatric prisons with empty expressions on their faces, drugged to their ears.¹⁴² Those who really ‘went out’ in Le Nuove are not here to give testimony to their experience and this study can only acknowledge their presence as those who survived and stayed on remember it.

Susanna Ronconi talked about women whom she saw in prison and who had lost it: ‘There were people who were doing very badly, you would often see women passing through there, young girls, stuffed with anti-depressants and who one morning you would no longer see because they had been sent to the psychiatric prison...to the OPG (she said this in a whisper).’ The fate of being sent to the psychiatric prison, renowned for being a place akin to hell, where no sane person could resist very long, reflected a hidden violence, the violence of the institution acting on the person. This violence was not always hidden:

And then there was also violence, because although le Nuove was a *giudiziario*¹⁴³ and not a *speciale*,¹⁴⁴ the notorious *squadretta*¹⁴⁵ was there anyway and it would intervene both on moments of protest -more rarely in my memory- and more specifically in moments of personal crisis. Even on single individuals (here she starts speaking in a low voice, like a whisper) so if one had a moment in which she no longer could take it and lost it (andava fuori- went out of her mind), refused to go back in the cell, screamed and beat the female guards then the male *squadretta* would come and would beat her, precisely, that’s it.

Susanna here describes personal crises as moments in which people literally ‘went out’, could no longer be contained inside the cell walls and thus had to be brought

¹³⁹ From interviews with F.R., Susanna Ronconi and Mauro Salmoira.

¹⁴⁰ From an interview with Mauro Salmoira

¹⁴¹ From an interview with F.R.

¹⁴² From an interview with Susanna Ronconi.

¹⁴³ A judicial prison, a jail where people are kept before facing trial. Le Nuove did however have a wing for long term prisoners.

¹⁴⁴ Special prisons where political prisoners as well as prisoners considered dangerous were held under much harsher conditions than ordinary prisons.

¹⁴⁵ Team of guards given the specific function of beating up unruly prisoners. Again ‘famous’ implying that it was well known, feared and talked about by prisoners.

down with violence. To 'go out', scream and rebel was an ultimately self-destructive act.

Sometimes breakdowns were used strategically by inmates, in order to go to the infirmary where conditions were better and the rooms less crowded, in order to avoid trial or strategically delay it if the maximum waiting time for trial had been reached, or to communicate with fellow inmates. An extreme example of a breakdown used as a secret message was an incident which occurred repeatedly during the second world war and which subverted, with a sort of humour, the deadly atmosphere dominant in Le Nuove at the time. Anna Cherchi, a female partisan who later was sent to Ravensbrück, recalled that every day at a certain time, the silence imposed on inmates in the prison was interrupted by a drawn out scream: 'voglio morire!'-I want to die!- coming from one of the cells in the male section of the prison. Shortly thereafter another inmate, from a different part of the corridor would scream back 'sciopa!'-die then!- Anna Cherchi recalled that:

...then we tried to find out what that was about because we said to ourselves that it had to be something pre-established, we didn't know what but it had to have a meaning. So...they say that they were two friends who had been split up (...) so to tell each other that they were alive every day one of them would yell out 'I want to die' and the other would answer back 'die then!' so they both knew that the other was alive. That was the only scream I ever heard in there. It came to a point where we actually waited for that scream, because it a certain sense it gave us comfort, it pushed us forward...

It seems strangely fitting that these inmates, who were living in the very dramatically life-threatening conditions of the German wing in Le Nuove should use a death-wish scream as a way of reasserting their existence. In that context, in which they were surrounded by death and by the threat of death, to express a *will* to die was not only a safe way of communicating with one another (since authorities could interpret it simply as a momentary personal breakdown) but also a way of openly subverting the intentions of the place and reasserting an almost joking individuality.

Reasons for breaking down in prison vary immensely and cannot be reduced to a simple reaction to prison space and the prison condition. It does seem obvious, however, that in conditions of captivity depression and anxiety are more likely to take their toll than under normal conditions. Daniel Gonin, a doctor in the French prison system, has written a book called *The Imprisoned Body* in which he describes symptoms and conditions he observed recurring in prison. Beyond the obvious ones

such as anxiety, depression, insomnia, restlessness and obsessive-compulsive disorder, Gonin also notes more unusual symptoms such as hyper-sensitivity to sound, loss of balance and auditory hallucinations.

It seems a now accepted theory in medical anthropology that illness is culturally determined¹⁴⁶ and that, especially when it comes to mental illness, people 'act out' their illness according to a familiar paradigm of behavior already existing in the surrounding culture.¹⁴⁷ Thus people experiencing stress and unhappiness in places in which a system of belief which incorporates the presence of witchcraft, for example, may express this unhappiness as the certainty of having been cursed. Or to give an example from western medicine, female hysteria of the type described by Freud¹⁴⁸ does not have its equivalent today when women in distress are more likely to act out their malaise in the form of panic attacks or eating disorders. Besides the extreme case of suicide one particular way prisoners act out their discomfort in prison is through self-mutilation. This is what Renato Curcio, in his short study of the physical effects of incarceration on the body called 'theatralized dissociation'.¹⁴⁹

Curcio sees self-mutilation in prison as a way of making visible the invisible pain that the institution has carved onto the inmate body. When prisoners are denied a transfer to another prison, or a visit with a loved one, or an appeal trial-for example- and are faced with silence and lack of action from the institution this 'cuts the inmate body with invisible blades for days and for nights, for weeks and months, before that same inmate will decide to dissociate himself from his body and show those cuts using a blade'. This form of dissociation 'focuses attention on the damage done and hidden by the institution and exposes it using analogy: you made me blind, so I will sew my eyelids shut; you made me mute, therefore I pierce my lips; you took my sexuality away, therefore I chop off my penis. The dissociated body thus becomes the scene and theater of the invisible tortures that crossed it invisibly'.

¹⁴⁶ See for example Vieda Skultans and John Cox (eds.), *Anthropological Approaches to Psychological Medicine, Crossing Bridges*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London, 2000, where Roland Littlewood writes that 'Contemporary anthropologists have proposed that all illnesses may be said to be 'culture bound' in that the human response to illness is always socially determined, while biology can never be taken in independence from human action', p.85.

¹⁴⁷ See for example A. Gaines (ed.), *Ethnopsychiatry. The cultural construction of professional and folk psychiatries*, New York University Press, New York, 1992 where it is argued that each culture generates a local psychiatry (called 'ethnopsychiatry' which 'constitutes and articulates the moral values and health concerns of that particular culture').

¹⁴⁸ See Hendrika Halberstadt-Freud, 'Studies on Hysteria One Hundred Years On: A Century of Psychoanalysis', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, pt. 5 (1996), pp.983-996.

¹⁴⁹ Renato Curcio, *Stati modificati della e nella reclusione*, <http://www.ecn.org/sissc/curcio.htm> (visited 2 April 2005)

Self-mutilation is thus a form of acting out real pressures, experienced physically and on the body. It is also a form of protest.

Susanna Ronconi also saw self-mutilation as a form of protest by those whom she regarded as not having enough cultural capital to confront the authorities with words or active political protest. She talked about how, in general, she and her fellow political prisoners had many more resources to maintain their sanity in prison. She said:

It would never have come to any of our minds to cut our veins as a form of struggle as if we had nothing else. Yes, this is something else that I haven't told you, I saw people in there who were cutting their veins, I even rescued one of them! So this thing of hurting oneself, of self-mutilation, of blood...I remember this and I remember that at one point they put nets up between one balcony and another because there were people who had tried to jump down. (...) To see women who had nothing but their blood to show for, this is really a tragedy!

In this passage from our interview Susanna Ronconi sees self-mutilation as a theatrical performance, a show, a desperate effort at communicating when language is lost and the only way to articulate a discomfort is through blood.

In an article about Turkish hunger strikers in prison Patrick Andersen wrote that the body of the hunger striker (which applies also to the body of those who engage in self-mutilation):

Asserts itself as a body-as a visceral representative of State-produced 'delinquency'-by performing its own (...) decline (...). Therefore, that body becomes not only the object of State punishment and torture, but also simultaneously an agent imminently responsible for performing violence upon itself (...). Embodiment becomes not only a mode of resistance, but also a seizure of state power-especially the state's power to enact violence upon its subjects.¹⁵⁰

Those who engage in self-harm are thus desperately trying to gain a form of agency in response to a condition of internment which they experience as deeply violent and which they cannot accept. Violence on the self in prison, for Andersen as well as to Ronconi and Curcio, is a performance about power, a desperate act of resistance.

For the prison doctor self-harm was simply a tool to obtain something, to get attention. It did not have the same implications that Curcio, Ronconi or Andersen

¹⁵⁰ Patrick Anderson, 'To Lie Down to Death for Days-the Turkish hunger strike, 2000-2003', *Cultural Studies*, vol.18 (2004), no.6, p.830.

ascribed to it, as a reaction to a condition of institutional oppression. Dr. Romano said to me:

In the beginning there were always people who either didn't want to be transferred or did not want to go to their trial. I remember that once one of them put a blade in his mouth, I wanted to take it out but I wasn't able to. Another who thought that he had been put in jail unfairly... to fix beds to the floors there were some pretty big metal bolts, he swallowed one. When this happened, and it happened on very many occasions, then we gave a diet based on boiled potatoes to wait for the natural pathways to eliminate it. Since he had not obtained what he wanted he ate a second bolt and the second one got caught so we had to operate to take it out...

The doctor talked about the inmate's body as an object whose functions he could control, from which he had the duty to expel undesired outside elements. Inmate pain or their state of mind was not contemplated, nor did he give any hint of sympathy for the inmates' possible cause for action. Dr. Romano responded using the "we" form, his decisions being a collective effort, backed by the approval and authority of the institution. This attitude towards the patient/inmate's body probably reflected the 'cloak of competence', which Dr. Romano probably used both as doctor and as prison worker in order to protect himself from painful feelings.¹⁵¹

This chapter continuously refers to 'the institution' or 'institutional authorities' as oppressive forces, placed in a dualistic opposition to inmates engaged in acts of resistance. Reasons for this lie in the way inmates themselves have structured their recollections and interpreted their time in prison. Power in Le Nuove, however, was distributed in a much more complex layering of interpersonal dynamics and continuously moved back and forth between guards and inmates, administrators and guards, prison directors and the public. The experience of incarceration on the body, however, which was limited and constrained by the prison cell, by bars, dependence and exposure to the guards' whims, more than other experiences fostered an understanding of 'the institution' as a unified agent acting against the body.

In a prison cell that potential violence on the body, the fear of losing one's self, of losing control and the anger and frustration towards one's situation were not just individual experiences but they were part and parcel of a bodily social memory

¹⁵¹ Elaine Crawley, 'Emotion and performance. Prison officers and the presentation of self in prison', *Punishment and Society*, vol. 6 (2004), no.4, pp.411-427,418.

induced by the prison environment. In a space like a cell in Le Nuove ‘the past is, as it were, sedimented in the body’ to use Paul Connerton’s expression.¹⁵² Even as one managed to stay alive and sane, the presence of those who didn’t, played a role in the bodily experience of the prison cell.

Renato Curcio’s stream of consciousness in *La Soglia* provides a strong example of this imagined presence:

Who else will stroll in this cell? Two cells up, on the other side of the wing, in a cubicle similar to this one, an old man, a little while before we were transferred, committed suicide. With a plastic bag. He stuck his head in and then he tightened the edges around his neck. So he suffocated. He left in silence, in the prostrate silence of a night. And yet I continue to hear his steps even if I don’t say anything to Giovannino who today goes up and down in that cell. I feel them on the soles of my feet that revisit paths marked in the fibers of our recluse bodies. I feel them in my dreams that visit his same territories. I feel them in my unconfessable questions: is there still a reason to live or is the supreme freedom of a definitive decision a better option?¹⁵³

In this painful passage Curcio seems to give voice to a bodily social memory of the cell. He talks about ‘paths marked in the fibers of our recluse bodies’ drawing a deep connection between himself and the man who committed suicide but also perhaps a more general connection between all imprisoned bodies. This connection also rests in the ‘unconfessable questions’ that emerge from the very condition of being locked in, with a distant future outside which often seems terribly abstract and uncertain.

Curcio seems to think that the knowledge of that horrid death in a plastic bag in the night is dangerous; he will not tell Giovannino who strolls precisely over the invisible footsteps of the man who died. Giovannino and the old man overlap because of the exact number of steps they are allowed to retrace in their obsessive wanderings in the cell. Like Giovannino’s cell, perhaps all prison cells can be seen as palimpsests of invisible life experience, invisible pain, sometimes invisible death. Curcio seems to think that an overlap, a contact with that invisible pain is inevitable because of the very spaces inmates are forced into, be they merely physical spaces or ‘dream territories’, presumably also the result of incarceration.

Curcio is referring to an experience of haunting which is deeply connected to the prison cell itself. As Daniel Miller noted: ‘the ghost may be said to be a partial

¹⁵² Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p.72.

¹⁵³ Curcio, *La Soglia*, *ibid.* p.59.

anthropomorphism of the longer history of the house (...) relative to its present inhabitants'.¹⁵⁴ The ghost of the man who committed suicide thus speaks to Curcio of his role within the prison in relation to the longer history of the prison Rebibbia, as well as in relation to the history of all prison spaces. Daniel Miller continues: 'In more extreme circumstances the objects around us can embody an agency that makes them oppressive and alienating and may in turn be projected in a personified form, as the ghost that haunts us'.¹⁵⁵ The cell, with its even walls and a floor space that allows for exactly six steps, the cell which stands as a silent witness to countless moments of despair, takes on an agency of its own, and as it were closes in on the body and mind of inmates held there.

The ghost that Curcio believes he hears, as well as the ghosts of the many who 'lost it' inside their prison cell can be addressed and taken seriously if we accept Jacques Derrida's challenge and we consider history as hauntology. Derrida's concept of 'hauntology' calls for a view of history which deconstructs the foundational notions of conventional historical narrative. The term 'hauntology' is a play on the word 'ontology'. Whereas ontological conceptions of history are based on the analysis of 'sources' from the past and assume that through the retrieval of sources the past can be reconstructed and described, hauntology declares the fundamental alterity of the past and expresses the impossibility of recapturing it. Hauntology sees sources rather as traces of what is irretrievably lost. Hauntology calls for an awareness of what has gone unrepresented and repressed in the writing of history. Because the past cannot be easily assimilated into narratives of the present, a history based in hauntology allows for the existence of ghosts and spectres, traces of the past that come to interrupt the present. Hauntology sees the spectre as that which 'one does not know: not out of ignorance, but because this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge. At least not to that which one thinks one knows by the name of knowledge'.¹⁵⁶ The spectre cannot be understood through a coherent narrative and the past cannot be 'known'. For Derrida spectrality arises when our certainties about 'truth', 'history', and 'reality' suddenly vanish from under us.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Miller, *Home Possessions*, ibid. chap 6, pp.107-122, p. 109.

¹⁵⁵ Miller, *Home Possessions*, ibid.p.120.

¹⁵⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, Routledge, London, 1994, p.6.

¹⁵⁷ Frederick Jameson, *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Spectres of Marx*, Verso, London, 1999, pp.38-39.

The challenge which Derrida poses to historians and cultural historians is to recognize the spectre, to 'give it back its speech' by getting away from a linear conception of time and history, and to consider the effects of the ghost in the present and for the future.

The 'presence' of the pasts of Le Nuove within the prison cell, as articulated by Curcio, radically alters any rational/scientific/chronological assessment of the prison and makes the cell deeply uncanny. Anthony Vidler explores the idea of the uncanny in relation to architectural structures. He writes: 'As articulated by Freud, the uncanny or Unheimlich is rooted by etymology and usage in the environment of the domestic, or the Heimlich, thereby opening up problems of identity around the self, the other, the body and its absence. Thence its force in interpreting the relations between the psyche and the dwelling, the body and the house, the individual and the metropolis'.¹⁵⁸ The prison cell itself comes to haunt prisoners altering their understanding of themselves, their bodies and their time. The absence of the bodies of previous inhabitants comes to intrude on inmates' experience of their cell and to affect their own bodily experience of the place. It is not only the ghosts of individuals which can be felt as uncanny and demanding but it is also the ghosts of previous prisons, such as Le Nuove during the anni di piombo, which continue to haunt Le Nuove today. The following two chapters will address these haunting manifestations and unfinished narratives, ruptures in history which stand out like scars in the prison's tissue.

¹⁵⁸ Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny- Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, The MIT Press, Cambridge Mass, 1992, p.x.

EXTRAORDINARY CELLS

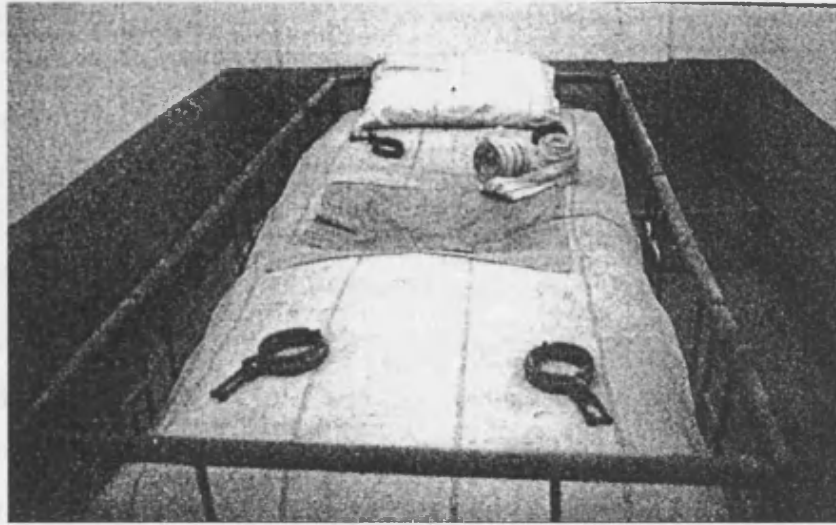


Fig.4-Containment bed of the type used roughly until 1978. Hole covered by towel.

Besides these ordinary cells I have been discussing there were other cells which also asserted their particular pressures on inmate bodies: these were the punishment cells, the clinic cells, and the nursery. These cells were roughly the same size as the biggest ordinary cells (although the punishment cells could be smaller and had significantly lower ceilings) but they were even further secluded and controlled than other cells. If the prison can be seen as a Russian doll, with layers and layers of compartments reached through consecutive steps, each marked by a door and a gate, then these three types of cell would be the final doll, the tiny wooden one with no further opening. All three exceptional cells were spaces of pain, for different reasons. Unfortunately I do not have any direct account of these places from inmates who were held there, so this section will be mostly descriptive/speculative and rely on second-hand testimony.

The punishment cells hosted prisoners whose bodies were often bruised and battered. In the 19th century inmates would be held in the punishment cells with no clothes on and they would be chained to the wall for days with only a little dry bread and water to eat and drink and forced to urinate and defecate on themselves, pestered by rats and blood-sucking insects. Later the same cells hosted partisans who were condemned to death by the Gestapo, their bodies aching after hours of beatings and sometimes torture, as they waited for dawn, when they would be led to the Martinetto shooting range to be shot. The same fate awaited a few Fascist leaders in the same cells at the end of the war, as well as criminals such as the bandits of

Villarbasse. One of these bandits was found by the priest, Padre Ruggero, under a heavy blanket singing Sicilian death songs/prayers/laments. When asked what he was doing, he said that he was singing for his own dead body because he knew that nobody would do it for him after he was dead. The same cells were then used again up to the late 1970s to host unruly inmates, many of them political prisoners suspected or known to have organized riots, who would be strapped to containment beds (which I also discuss in Chapter Three in relation to guards and violence). These beds (see figure 4) were leather contraptions where inmates could be strapped half naked for days on end, with only a hole in the mattress from which to expel their waste. This experience was particularly horrific for women who felt the unspoken threat of rape as described by Susanna Ronconi in her account of hearing about her friend's containment. She wrote:

Sara had talked to me about the basement, about her containment bed in the cells in Le Nuove, in the year of revolt, 1977. About the smile of the Marshal, after the struggle and the screams and the refusal to return into her cell, in turning the rough bandages around the wrists and fixing them to the bench. Two days and two nights. Blades of oblique sunlight and darkness and mice and flies. And the voices of the other women, calling and greeting and whistling so as not to make her feel alone. And the screams of the guards to make them quiet. Tied hands and bodies exposed to the total power of another and darkness around full of noises to be deciphered without sleeping and the rustling of mice or of military boots that come near (why are they coming here? To do what? What will happen now?)¹⁵⁹

Susanna's friend told her this story only once, when she was very drunk. Susanna mentioned it to me during our interview, a story of violence which she had appropriated as her own, trying to imagine her friend's horrific experience, and suffering for her. Ronconi's story which I transcribed above was taken from a website of creative writings and impressions by ex prisoners. As a creative piece it is also shaped by imagery drawn from a shared imaginary of bondage and sexual fantasy (especially in the wording and description of the smiling Marshal wrapping the bandages to the containment bed), but here the clichéd prison fantasy is immediately subverted by the reality of her friend's fear, not at all exciting, only horrific.

¹⁵⁹ Diario minimo di un altro tempo di Susanna Roconi, <http://www.filiarmonici.org/diariominimo.html> (visited September 13, 2004).



Fig.5-The clinic with doctors, an inmate patient and an administrative guard

At the end of each wing there was a clinic cell where inmates would go to receive any medicines or small treatment they required and where a doctor or nurse would give them enemas, shots, or pills. These pills provided solace and oblivion to inmates, sometimes numbing them to a destructive degree, as in the example provided earlier in this chapter by Susanna Ronconi. In the central part of the prison there was an actual surgical centre, opened in 1962, where small operations could be conducted without needing to transfer inmates to the city hospital.¹⁶⁰ This clinic was run by two doctors and a few inmate nurses who would also do rounds to the clinic cells at the end of each wing. Extremely ill inmates, those suffering from drug withdrawal symptoms,¹⁶¹ and those who had mutilated themselves, would be allowed to sleep in the clinic cells where beds were clean and the environment more quiet. There were rumours that some of the most powerful criminals, notably mafia members, would buy their way into the clinic where conditions were more comfortable. The doctor Romano confirmed this rumour when he said that once he had hired two prisoners to help him with the clinic paper work. Romano said:

I was the cardiologist of the prison and you have to be careful because I had two inmates who helped me as secretaries and I would dictate the result of the electrocardiogram, they would write it in a logbook and then I realized, I don't know how, by chance, looking at the clinical files I saw an inmate who was fine whose file made him appear to be dying of heart problems, so I became suspicious and I said what? So what did this blessed young boy do? I

¹⁶⁰ Secondo Ercole, *Padre Ruggero Ieri e Oggi*, Grafica Nizza, Collegno (To), 2001, p.35.

¹⁶¹ From interview with F.R..

am sure they paid him! Records of heart sickness they wrote in, then they would type it up and put it on a strip and they would stick it in their clinic file.

For those who were not really ill the clinic cell was the most comfortable cell in the prison, a space where they had more privacy and more quiet. If they could bribe themselves into the clinic cell, they could probably also obtain other services once there such as better food and better forms of communication. For those who were really ill, however, the prison clinic cells were sites of misery where their bodies were further subjected to the whims of others and where they had very little say as patients since they were always and first of all inmates.

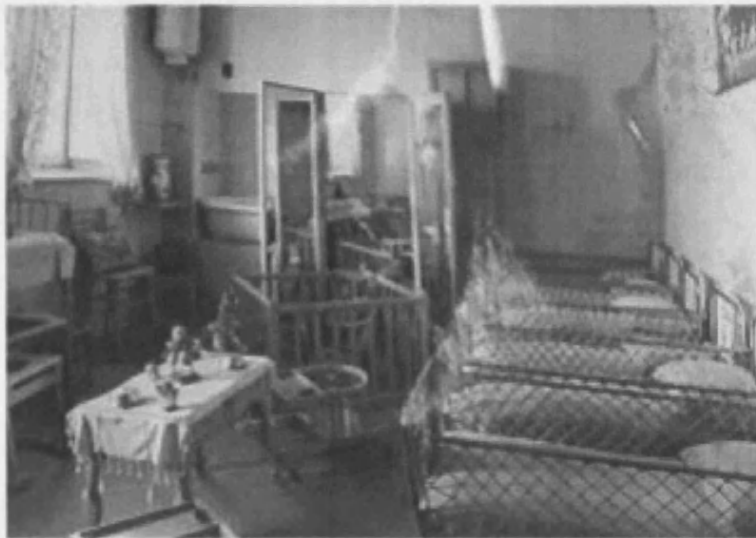


Fig.6-A picture of the nursery set up in one of the larger cells in the female section.

Finally the nursery cell, or 'nido'-literally translated 'nest'- was yet another cell space exerting its own particular pressure on inmate bodies, or worse, on the bodies of their children. Babies born in prison and the children of female inmates under the age of three were allowed to stay in the prison and could see their mothers for several hours a day. They would be held in the nursery at night time and they could only be tended to by the nuns. If they cried and wanted their mothers they would not be able to see them until morning. If the nuns were too busy, which was often the case in times of overcrowding, there would be nobody to pick the little babies up and calm them down.

The nursery was described to me by the wife of prison guard Romano in these terms:

I saw children in prison. I would always ask when I had to go out (...) sometimes I would go inside the female section of the prison and they were there, the little rooms all decorated with stuffed animals...they were there. They were inside but they were well kept, they had nice little rooms with toys but they couldn't go out very much (...) Once I even asked, I would have taken them out... when my daughter was small I used to take her outside and I had asked if I could take some of the kids with me and take them home with me sometimes as if I were an aunt...but they said no, that the mothers didn't allow it. I thought it was a pity because that way they could have gone out, seen a bit of the outside.

Romano's wife clearly felt pity for the children and somehow resented the mothers for not allowing her to take the kids with her. Only the nuns had permission to take the children outside although inmate's relatives could also go pick up the kids and take them for walks or to their homes if the mother gave her consent. The children were legally and technically free, they could be taken out of the prison by relatives and some of them would go to nursery school on the outside. In their little nursery cells, away from their mothers and unable to fully understand what was happening to them, however, they were perhaps even more imprisoned than the most hardened of criminals. For their mothers, having the children in the prison was certainly preferable to only seeing them at family visits, but it involved complex feelings of guilt and frustration at not being allowed the kind of control over their own child's life that mothers have on the outside.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on the prison cell as a lived and remembered space, as a site of what Michel Foucault has called 'heterotopia' but also as a space in which prisoners were able to negotiate a life and agency for themselves, constantly set against the haunting agency of the prison building. The first section on 'first impressions, arrivals' concentrates on ex inmates' recollections of their first impressions of the prison, impressions which also provide a description of the atmosphere in the building during different times. While for example the political prisoners led to Le Nuove in the 1970s found a prison bustling with activity and overpowering noise, those held there during the Second World War experienced a site of deep danger and deadly silence. This section is meant to provide a brief introduction to prisoners' view of prison and also considers the ways prisoner

memories of their arrivals in Le Nuove conform to or depart from shared imaginings of prison spaces.

The section entitled 'home' focuses on the cell as a problematic home space. It discusses the ways in which inmates attempted to make the cell space into a home and how institutional intervention made their efforts always only partially successful. The section discusses the centrality of food in prisoner narratives about their cells and also examines coffee, cigarettes, and sex as signifiers of domesticity. The section considers how ex inmates seem to reject the domesticity of the cell and its physicality in their recollections; they prefer to use memories of their material coping strategies for asserting a sense of having survived. The section sees the sorting out of material objects, and in particular the shedding at the time of departure of all possessions used in prison, in terms of what Jean-Sebastien Marcoux has seen as a working through of cumbersome memories.

The section on 'Prison Time' focuses on the ways ex inmates describe and relate to their time in prison, which was at once full of activities and empty, creating a dramatic break in their autobiographies. The section focuses in particular on the memories of political prisoners and on the difference in their sense of prison time between their early years in prison, when they continued to see themselves as members of armed bands with a political agenda and a group- determined prison routine, and the later years when they experienced time in prison alongside ordinary prisoners, as individuals. These political prisoners saw a significant difference in their experience of prison time in the years after the end of the armed struggle, when it stopped feeling like productive time and rather became a time of delayed life, frozen experience.

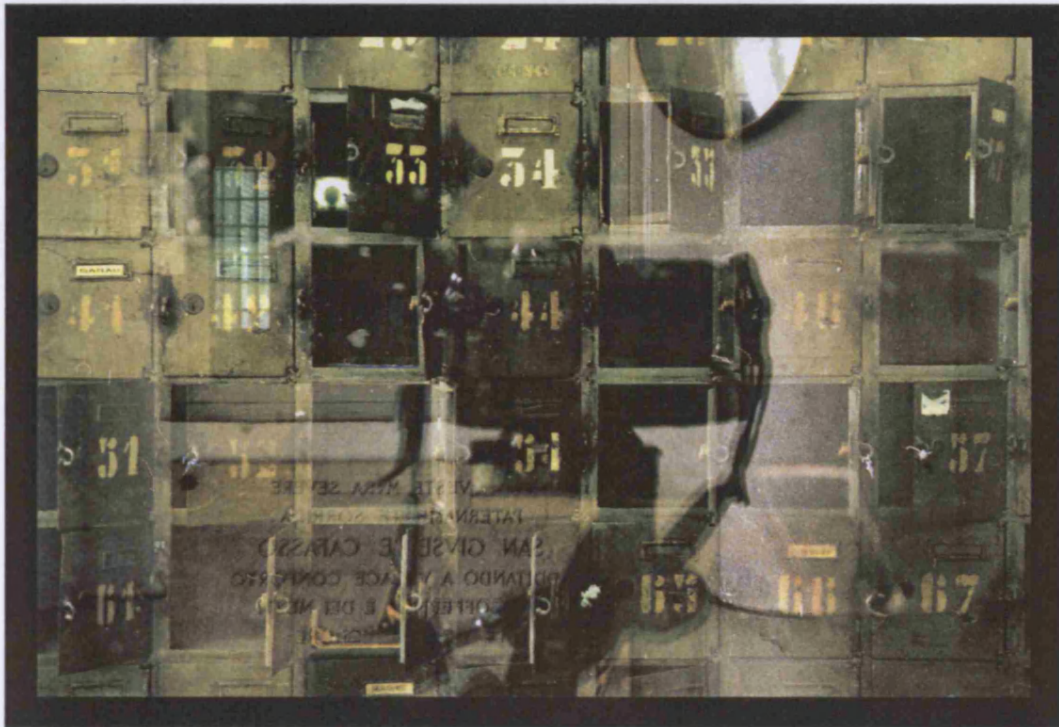
The section on 'breakdowns' considers the continued presence of those who didn't manage to withstand the prison's brutal pressures and the impact that the constant awareness of the possibility of breaking down had on those trying to 'survive' within the prison. It considers the particular forms breakdowns take in prison (and dwells in particular on the practice of self-mutilation as an expression of distress and as an ultimate form of protest) as being part of the bodily experience of prison. This bodily experience of prison is at once deeply individual and an expression of the ways the broader past of the prison gets 'sedimented in the body' more generally. Breakdowns are then almost a form of possession by the uncanny forces of the cell, weighing down on prisoner bodies.

The final section on 'extraordinary cells' focuses on the punishment cells, clinic cells and nursery cells as exceptions within the prison system, and sites of very particular diversified suffering.

Overall this chapter explores the complex relations inmates had with their cells and considers the extent to which these relations were shaped and affected by the prison space and by the rules of the prison institution, which also transformed over time.

THE TURRETS

CHAPTER THREE



Reflection on the glass of the guards' entrance lockers where they would store their guns. A guard would normally sit behind the glass to register visitors and incoming authorities.

The turret assignments were always given to lower ranking guards, usually on their first months on the job, though in times of crisis - during riots or escapes - most

THE TURRETS

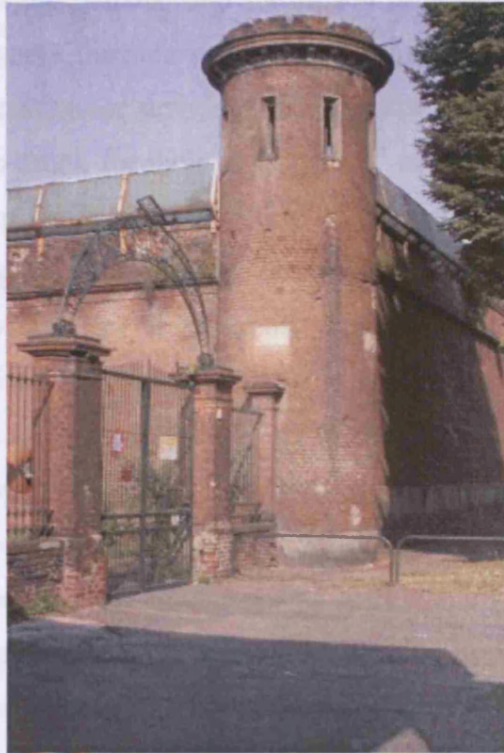


Fig.7- Turret on Corso Vittorio Emanuele II

Visitors to Le Nuove are never allowed on the turrets. They were always off-limits to non-guards and they remain forbidden territory even now that the prison is closed. Up tiny brick stairs and along the stone walls, guards spent days and nights looking out for escaping prisoners and potential outside attackers, sometimes under the scorching sun, other times in temperatures so cold that the director thought it necessary to assign them a small bottle of whisky to keep them warm during the particularly cold foggy winter nights. From the ground the turrets make the prison look almost medieval and all along the walls are hard green bulletproof protections held together by metal frames now entirely rusted and bent. Some of the glass protections are shattered, perhaps by the mythical terrorist bullets shot from speeding FIAT cars, most probably by stones thrown during demonstrations, or by some lonely act of vandalism by a wandering hooligan in the middle of the night.

The turret assignments were always given to lower ranking guards, usually on their first months on the job, though in times of crisis- during riots or escapes- most

of the guards would have to convene up there, armed and ready to shoot. On ordinary night shifts each guard would be assigned a turret and a stretch of wall where they would consume their hours, smoking and staring out at the street, holding their machine guns tightly in their hands, at times trembling, at times struggling not to fall asleep. Guards obeyed the marshal and the prison director and they worked under very stringent rules, where the salary for days of work could be withdrawn on the basis of a small distraction or arriving two minutes late for duty.¹⁶² Sometimes guards would show up drunk for their night shift,¹⁶³ or would be caught sleeping, or stealing materials from the prison, or selling illegal goods to prisoners¹⁶⁴ and then they would face a special disciplinary committee that would decide their fate, whether they would be fired or only heavily reprimanded. They were rarely given holidays and during times of overcrowding it was quite common that guards could work for weeks before having a single day off work, least of all on the weekends.

Carmelo Parente, a retired high-ranking prison guard and amateur poet, told me during our interview that: 'going into the prison, having to do with inmates, there is little to be happy for...because from morning until evening it's a job that is mostly sad'. Going into the prison today it is easy to imagine how that could be so, how working for days on end in such gloomy surroundings with very little diversion and under significant stress could be quite depressing. During the 1970s the job felt deeply dangerous and frightening in addition to 'mostly sad' for prison guards. They were threatened, taken hostage during riots, shot at from the street, and two prison guards Lorenzo Cotugno and Giuseppe Lorusso met their death at the hands of the Red Brigades and *Prima Linea* who murdered them outside their homes while they were preparing to go to work.

After a brief discussion of guard/prisoner relations generally and in particular during the 1970s, this chapter will dwell primarily on the narratives surrounding the deaths of the two prison guards Cotugno and Lorusso from the perspective of the guards and of other prison workers. This focus on these two smaller events, as a way of discussing broader issues relating to history and memory, is similar in approach to

¹⁶² See for example Registro Rapporti Agenti box 784-785 Fondo Casa Circondariale di Torino, Archivio di Stato, Turin. The disciplinary committee was formed by the director, the head guard, the accountant, the priest or the doctor who decided whether to reduce one's pay by $\frac{3}{4}$ or by half.

¹⁶³ See letter of 7 May 1980 requesting removal of prison guard because always drunk, Box 6561 'Atti vari per il direttore', fondo Casa Circondariale di Torino 'Le Nuove', Archivio di Stato, Turin.

¹⁶⁴ For examples of all of the above see Box 784 Rapporti guardie 1946, fondo Casa Circondariale di Torino 'Le Nuove', Archivio di Stato, Turin.

the 'micro-histories' produced and discussed by authors such as Carlo Ginzburg and Alessandro Portelli. By focusing on the narratives and lives of ordinary people caught in the midst of their historical time, both writers are able to examine aspects of the past and its interpretation, which would otherwise completely escape traditional history.¹⁶⁵ The chapter will also discuss the question of prison violence and its denial and some of the broader social and class dynamics, which were brought out and played out during the encounter, in the 1970s, between prison guards and the new and strange political prisoners they were suddenly faced with. The chapter will draw out narratives in an attempt at examining the complexities of the questionable, fantastic and dramatic memory of the 1970s in the prison. The narratives examined involve particular myths and assumptions, as well as rumours, which contribute to making that time sound unbelievable and the stories 'unreliable' to listeners today. My aim is not to correct these stories or to find out an official truth about them, but rather to consider how these separate versions of the same story contribute to the cultural memory of the prison.

THE PRISON GUARD SYNDROME

That of the prison guard is not a profession that instantly invokes respect and sympathy. Quite the opposite, guards are often the brunt of negative stereotypes. In films about prison guards they are usually depicted as villains,¹⁶⁶ ruthlessly violent and sadistic,¹⁶⁷ or most often as dim-witted thugs, easily tricked and corrupted,¹⁶⁸ as bodies to be hit on the head, tied up, or briefly taken hostage while the hero rushes off to his freedom.¹⁶⁹ Guards don't like to be called 'guardie'-guards, but they prefer the term 'agente di custodia'-custodial agent, because of the negative associations evoked by the word guard (for brevity and convenience I will nevertheless continue

¹⁶⁵ Carlo Ginzburg elegantly discusses the popular culture of the Sixteenth century through the eyes of a literate miller in *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*, John and Anne Tedeschi (trans.), The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1980. Alessandro Portelli addresses many different aspects of personal and collective myth making in his composite history of Terni: *Biografia di una città. Storia e racconto: Terni 1830-1985*, Einaudi, Turin, 1985 where the voices of factory workers, farmers, union workers etc...address particular incidents from the past to form a collective picture of the memory of the city.

¹⁶⁶ See for example Franklin Schaffner, *Papillon* (FRANCE/USA, 1973).

¹⁶⁷ See for example Stuart Rosenberg, *Cool Hand Luke* (USA, 1967) or Frank Darabont, *The Green Mile* (USA 1999).

¹⁶⁸ See for example Tony Kaye, *American History X* (USA, 1998) or Frank Darabont, *The Shawshank Redemption* (USA, 1994).

¹⁶⁹ Or tries to...see Woody Allen, *Take the Money and Run* (USA, 1969).

to refer to them as guards). Although the term ‘agente di custodia’ was already introduced in 1890,¹⁷⁰ the guards’ insistence on the term today is also a function of the battles fought and only won in recent years to improve their work conditions and their status.

While inmates struggled to find diversions to improve their life in prison, where they could study or play games, and in later years move from cell to cell to socialize over coffee or watch TV, prison guards were expected to stand and watch, they were not allowed to socialize with inmates, they could not read or engage in activities that might distract their attention. The lucky ones were given administrative positions in the matriculation office where they could have a more personal relationship with inmates who would often tell their life stories or at least explain the reasons for their crimes.¹⁷¹ Some worked in the prison shop or the warehouse managing goods to be distributed to the prison cells, others worked in the kitchens, directing the prisoners and ordering supplies of food. Most just stood guard at the end of grey corridors, or up on the walls, waiting, waiting.

A guard who was interviewed for a book by Remo Bassetti entitled *Derelitti e delle pene. Carcere e giustizia da Kant all'indultino*, said:

What ruins our life is frustration, the great malaise of the prison guard is to feel himself treated worse than an inmate, maybe at times it's true but it can't be otherwise because the prison exists to take care of the inmate, for example if the inmates ask me to play football even if it wasn't planned for that day, I always say yes, if the prison guards ask me I have to say no because if they get hurt we have problems with the insurance, and you can understand that they grumble and think ‘what do I have to do? Start stealing too so I can play football?’ and then this very funny thing happens, that the prison guard becomes envious of the inmate, and starts to live doing the same things that the inmate does, so some of my colleagues make little shelves for themselves in their room sticking empty packets of cigarettes next to the wall like you can see in prison cells. ‘What the fuck are you doing?’- I say-‘don't you see that you are becoming similar to an inmate?’¹⁷²

Inmates and guards lived a symbiotic relationship and for however much regulations would make contact between the two forbidden, guards would clearly observe and absorb the behaviours and habits of inmates with whom they spent most of their

¹⁷⁰ See 1890 Storia della Polizia Penitenziaria, http://www.poliziapenitenziaria.it/chisiamo/storia_1890.htm (visited 30 July, 2005).

¹⁷¹ From an interview with Inspector Farina.

¹⁷² Remo Bassetti, *Derelitti e delle pene. Carcere e giustizia da Kant all'indultino*, Editori Riuniti, Rome, 2003.

days. Newspapers and guards themselves often repeated that prison guards were the ones who were facing life in prison, not the inmates. Most inmates in Le Nuove were there temporarily, waiting to face trial or spending the last months of their sentencing before being released, and the care and attention they received from priests, lawyers and volunteers was never directed at guards.

Trapped in the prison for long hours with no prospect of release it is understandable that the feelings guards had towards inmates could sometimes resemble envy. This sense of envy towards inmates was probably never felt so strongly as during the time when leftist political prisoners and members of armed bands were held in the prison and managed to draw onto themselves media attention and sympathy for their conditions. After the waves of prison riots, which started in the late 1960s, inmates eventually managed to improve their prison conditions, but conditions for guards remained the same until a reform of their corps was finally passed in 1990.¹⁷³ Prison riots further exacerbated the conditions of prison guards since they added stress, fear and exhaustion and guards were forced to work over time, while receiving very little sympathy (and little pay) for their plight.¹⁷⁴

In addition to receiving little recognition for their work, guards were also the victims of prejudices and stereotypes because of their regional origin, as I discussed briefly in Chapter One. A list of guard names from 1979 including Avvantaggiato Achille, Avvertenza Antonio, Arzu Franco, Camilleri Giosuè, Callà Settimio, Calicchio Vito, Cantacessi Gennaro, De Petrillo Pasquale, Di Cristo Michele, Frau Giuseppe, Iurato Francesco, Laganà Salvatore, Mulas Battista, Perru Bruno, Zucaro Vittorio (just to give some of the most melodic examples) reveals an established fact: by the late 1970s the vast majority of prison guards came from the South of Italy and from Sardinia.¹⁷⁵ Many of the guards spoke with strong dialectical inflexions and few

¹⁷³ Guards up to that point had been a militarised force and through strikes and agitations in the early 1980s they were able to get laws in place to demilitarise their force and to allow them to unionise. See 1990 *Storia della Polizia Penitenziaria*, http://www.polizia-penitenziaria.it/chiamo/storia_1990.htm, (visited 30 July 2005).

¹⁷⁴ Several articles, however, appeared in newspapers pointing out this imbalance in public sympathy. See for example the articles: 'Ma alle guardie chi ci pensa?', *Il Giorno*, August 1976, p.3; or 'Agenti prigionieri come i detenuti. Malessere alle Nuove', *La Stampa*, 1 September, 1979.

¹⁷⁵ The guards and prison administrators I interviewed confirmed this fact. Recruitment of prison guards was run by public contest heavily advertised in Southern regions where unemployment was also higher than in the rest of Italy.

of them had much more than a middle school diploma, while some could barely read and write.¹⁷⁶

The prison director Surace commented in 1980, rather disparagingly, that 'only little kids with the fifth grade are left: out of 300 I think I don't have a single Northerner, here we get the poorest of the poor, those that don't know anybody'.¹⁷⁷ This statement captures some of the stereotypical views that certain Northern Italians had of Southern Italians as helpless and ignorant peasants and it was a view that held guards in contempt and in pity at the same time, a view that would become explicit when prison guards were assassinated. All the guards I interviewed, however, presented their arrival in Turin as an active choice on their part, not at all a result of a lack in contacts or support. Most had chosen to be transferred to the Turin prison because they had relatives already living there. They all said that they chose their job because it was an 'impiego sicuro'-a reliable job- and for some it presented a chance to return to Italy after a period of work abroad, in factories in Germany or Switzerland.¹⁷⁸ They did not complain to me about Turin, nor about the treatment they may have received when they first moved there as Southern Italians, but they commented proudly on the houses they had bought,¹⁷⁹ and on their children's university degrees.

Although I tried to address the question of immigration by asking Southern Italian guards explicitly whether they had found it hard to move to Turin and whether they had experienced discrimination, they vehemently denied having had a difficult time. It was clear that they did not consider themselves 'immigrants' and this must be a function of the national nature of their job. The prison guard corps, in fact, functions on a national level and jobs are assigned by public contest. Salvatore Spatafora had worked on one of the smaller islands off the coast of Naples, for example, while Carmelo Parente had worked in Palermo and in Solmona; they were assigned to Turin by public contest and they lived in the officers' housing just as they

¹⁷⁶ Being able to read and write well, as well as having good mathematical abilities played an enormous part in career advancement for prison guards. Carmelo Parente became Marshall thanks to his writing talents, while Salvatore Spatafora was assigned to the matriculation office and to administrative positions because he was quite good in maths, points they both highlighted in their interviews.

¹⁷⁷ See Lietta Tornabuoni, 'Vita e Morte alle Carceri Nuove', *La Stampa*, 29 June 1980.

¹⁷⁸ As was the case for Salvatore Spatafora.

¹⁷⁹ Unmarried guards had to stay in the guards' quarters in the Caserma Lamarmora. There were apartments inside Le Nuove for the higher ranking officers and their families. Married guards could, if they chose to, live in private apartments outside.

would have done in any other prison in Italy. Their experience of transferring to Turin was thus radically different from the experience of thousands of southern Italians who moved to Turin to work in the factories and struggled to find housing and a sense of belonging in the hostile Northern city.¹⁸⁰ Although they may not have perceived themselves as immigrants, guards were placed in that category by people like the prison director Surace, the school teacher Riccardo Contini and the priest Padre Ruggero as I will discuss later in this chapter and this perceived 'inferior' status probably also played a part in guards' relations with political prisoners.

GUARD-PRISONER RELATIONS IN THE 1970s

During the 1970s the power balance between prisoners and guards was subverted by political prisoners who were often highly educated, looked down on prison guards, and would openly bypass their power by demanding to speak directly to higher authorities, setting up networks of prisoners that could threaten guards, and rioting. Susanna Ronconi, for example, bragged to me about how she and her fellow *Prima Linea* members bypassed the power of the marshal and the mother superior. She said:

There the mother superior ran the section at the time, (...) she was Marshall number two (...) then there was the head guard and then the Marshall. There! To give you an idea. So (...) we undid this thing a bit because we stopped addressing her and we went directly to the director, our interlocutor was the prison director, neither the marshal nor her. I think this was a very logical choice. Therefore probably we were a bit of an element of disruption in all this construction of power in there.

¹⁸⁰ This statement is a simplification and the reality of immigration was much more complex and diverse. Housing for new immigrants was indeed a problem, however. See for example: Fabio Levi, *L'immigrazione*, in *Storia di Torino. LX. Gli anni della Repubblica*, Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), Einaudi, Turin, 1999, p. 157-187; or *I problemi dell'insediamento meridionale a Torino e nei comuni della cintura*, in *Nord e sud nella società e nell'economia italiana di oggi. Torino, 30 marzo - 8 aprile 1967. Atti del convegno promosso dalla Fondazione Luigi Einaudi*, Einaudi, 1968, pp. 413-447. For a more general discussion of immigration in Turin during the boom years and in the 1970s see: Goffredo Fofi, *L'immigrazione meridionale a Torino*, Feltrinelli, Milan 1975; or Nicola Negri, 'I nuovi torinesi: immigrazione, mobilità e struttura sociale', Guido Martinotti (ed.), *La città difficile. Equilibri e disuguaglianze nel mercato urbano*, Progetto Torino, Angeli, Milan 1982, pp. 51-179.

The same was true in the male section of the prison where members of the armed bands also disregarded the power of prison guards, or used it to their own advantage. Luca Nicolotti told me that he and his fellow Red Brigadists would receive special treatment from the guards who wanted to please them, for example they would be given fresh pizza whenever one of the inmate cooks was asked to make it for the guards, a real luxury in prison.

When guards remember their encounter with members of the Red Brigades and other armed political organizations, they always appear to speak from a position of inferiority and awe, mostly due to the fact that they perceived these inmates as 'refined' and 'having culture' sharply in contrast with themselves. This awe is combined with a profound sense of danger, which they perceived on their person, a danger, which at once terrified them and made them protagonists of one of the most tragic aspects of our recent history. Political prisoners not only challenged the existing order in the prison by their status as 'educated' people, but they could also challenge the hidden order of power by which guards could threaten prisoners, by setting in motion a system of secret threats and open revenge and violence pressed upon guards by their organizations on the outside.

Carmelo Parente told me:

The Brigatists were refined delinquents. Besides they were 'gente istruita'-educated people- who knew how to talk. But anyway in the end when there were Curcio and company here at Le Nuove they were three and I had put them, to please them, in other words to 'farci voler bene'- make them like us.¹⁸¹ I had put them all in one section in two little cells also so they could agree on what they would say because they were going to trial (....) they had a TV, things...and I would pay a visit to them in the afternoons. Then one fine day my superior told me 'Marshall, don't go to the second wing anymore' 'Why?' because they wanted to take me hostage! And I didn't go to the second wing anymore. In the end after I resigned I found out that I was in the list of those who were supposed to be eliminated. (...) And the one who was supposed to eliminate me was a woman in whose purse they found a gun, with a file with my last name and where I lived and didn't live.

In the above passage Carmelo Parente shows an initial subservience towards the 'Brigadists' who manage to get what they want from him by their simple power and ability to awe him. Parente wants these inmates to 'love him' (possibly also as a form of prevention from harm) so he gives them special treatment, and going to visit them

¹⁸¹ Literally 'to make them *love* us'.

once a day seems to be something he truly enjoys, since he goes there by choice. This special situation of sympathy and potential closeness is subverted by the shocking revelation that he is to be taken hostage and this is further corroborated by the discovery of his name on the list of those to be eliminated. His being on the list also serves to re-balance the inferiority complex Parente may have had towards these prisoners since it restores his role as an enemy in their eyes, worthy of a certain kind of respect.

All the guards I interviewed told me that their name had been found on a list of those to be eliminated found by the police in a raid of a Red Brigade hideout. This fact is always repeated to me in horror but with a sense of pride as well, as if being on that list would mark them as significant, politically important. This attitude is in contradiction with the way the guards talk about their assassinated colleagues who are only regarded with pity. Nevertheless most of the guards I interviewed resigned shortly after the killings of Lorenzo Cotugno and Giuseppe Lorusso, some after discovering that they could be next.¹⁸² The situation in the prison was unliveable, they said, and they were suffering from serious anxiety and depression exacerbated by frequent attacks¹⁸³ (or presumed attacks) on the prison from the outside,¹⁸⁴ and by their extended work hours due to under-staffing.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Following the killing of Cotugno and Lorusso, the kneecapping of the prison doctor Romano and the hostage taking of two guards who were held at knife-point by three escaping prisoners all 300 guards in Le Nuove asked to be transferred to other prisons in protest, and many ended up resigning. See article 'Paura, vita disumana, pochi soldi alla base della protesta- Tutte le guardie delle Nuove chiedono di essere trasferite', *Gazzetta del Popolo*, 12 August 1979, p.6.

¹⁸³ See for example 'Sparano contro le Nuove. Da un'auto esplosi colpi di pistola contro un agente. Tensione fra le guardie', *Gazzetta del Popolo*, 3 August 1979. See also 'Siamo bersagli sul muro di cinta' *La Stampa*, 22 August 1979.

¹⁸⁴ See for example Registro Rapporti Agenti 1978, in box 1622 of the Fondo Casa Circondariale di Torino 'Le Nuove', Archivio di Stato, Turin reporting times prison guards shot bullets in response to real or presumed dangers. On 10 June 1978 a report says 'one presumes that is must have been a fixation of the prison guard.' On 4 June many other shots were fired because of 'noises coming from the outside'. On 15 December 1978 guards were shot at while on the turrets and two policemen were shot dead in front of the prison. On 14 February 1979 'A telephone call to the *Gazzetta del Popolo* says that the outer walls of Le Nuove had been mined; there were checks but no traces of explosive were found'.

¹⁸⁵ This was a constant problem in prisons. See for example letter from the Inspector General to the General Directorate of the Ministry of Justice from 27 January 1966 in box 7343 of the Fondo Casa Circondariale di Torino, the Archivio di Stato, Turin. It reads 'the report produced by the Marshall in charge which I have examined, displays the actual numeric deficiency in the personnel of this institution. (...) This restriction has barely allowed us to allow ordinary time off over the past year, sometimes in reduced measure, while it has not been possible to permit weekly rest. (...) Bear in mind that the inmate population is around 1000 units. I therefore ask this honourable ministry to raise the number of the security personnel to at least 188 units, a number recognized as indispensable by this central office'.

After a sentinel in Le Nuove fired machine gun shots at a man who was fixing an antenna on a roof across from the prison in 1979, a report against prison guards stated: 'The prison guards assigned to turret duties shoot too easily fearing possible attacks from the outside. This, of course, is the direct consequence of a certain climate of terror and of fear in which this personnel finds itself moving, since they have been threatened for years with retaliations both on the part of inmates and of the organizations acting on the outside'.¹⁸⁶ The guards I interviewed described that time between the first riots of '69 and the death of their colleagues as a build up escalation of trouble, fear, intimidation and violence, which eventually became impossible.

The prison guard Spatafora told me:

Oh, what do you expect, in Turin there was a period every morning they were killing one! Eh! They killed one every morning between journalists, police, *carabinieri*, of us, lawyers, also Fiat personnel, I don't know if you read the story....I...here in Le Nuove an awful thing, reports from lots and lots of episodes, then bombs in the home, they put, they burned the cars belonging to the personnel...every day that I had to be part of this environment, too often, because they didn't just hit, let's say, the servants of the state that were the actual policemen, they also hit lawyers, they also targeted journalists, they targeted the doctors, they also hit the FIAT manager, so it was a general thing. For them they were all servants of the state those people, and once let's say it was the personalized individual in fact, no, the policeman, maybe it happened that it was easier to strike, since there weren't any risks.

Spatafora's comments about the 'servants of the state' seem to want to make a distinction between the police and all other more respected bourgeois professions (doctors, lawyers), amongst which he may be placing his own. This may be simply his way of painting a generalized picture of fear and violence, affecting all sectors of society. It might also be a way of countering the depiction of members of his own profession as servants of the state, 'elevated' by being in the same category as the doctors, lawyers and Fiat industrialists also targeted by terrorist groups. In the final part of his statement, however, Spatafora may be pointing to the fact that in the latter part of the *anni di piombo* there was a shift from targeting particular individuals for their own individual political oppressive roles, to the targeting of policemen and other lower state workers whose murder was less risky. In Spatafora's eyes it was then that his own job also took on a much more dangerous quality.

¹⁸⁶ From Registro rapporti contro gli agenti, in box 4157 of the Fondo Casa Circondariale di Torino, Archivio di Stato, Turin, file dated 5 October 1979.

The passage from Spatafora captures exactly the sort of exaggeration that the prison director Pietro Buffa complained to me about when he said that the memory of the prison concentrates on particular periods of time, and that this is not 'buona memoria'-good memory. Buffa said that when he first started as prison director he was told stories of 'rivolte, botte e terrorismo'- riots, blows and terrorism- but that he wasn't at all sure they were true. 'Could they be true? Is that plausible? They are stories of extreme hardships, battles, flames guns and knives.' Then he interrupted himself and said 'actually something must be true because there were dead people, and the dead are real. But these are memories of things reported in front of a bar. They are not interesting, unreliable.' To Buffa and to people like me, who did not live through that time, some of the stories from the *anni di piombo* sound incredible and unbelievable; we may check for statistics and numbers of dead and wounded and make our own rational calculations.¹⁸⁷ For those who lived through it the sense of imminent danger, of daily threat and terrifying indiscriminate violence was real (and corroborated by the deaths of friends and colleagues) and this has left a tangible mark.

It is understandable that in guards' recollections of their work in the prison and career, the memory of the *anni di piombo* and of the killings of their colleagues should take on an almost mythical dimension, having constituted for years a watershed in their own lives and in their interpretation of their own interaction with that very complex, dangerous and frightening time.

¹⁸⁷ According to the Italian Association for the Victims of Terrorism, <http://www.vittimeterrorismo.it> (visited 16 July 2005) there were a total of 19 terrorism-related murders in Turin between 1977 and 1982.

A BODY ON THE GROUND

The death of Giuseppe Lorusso



Fig.8 -Giuseppe Lorusso

There are many rumours about why Giuseppe Lorusso was shot by *Prima Linea*. A quiet man from southern Italy, a father of two small children, who had signed up to be a prison guard after his military service, after years as a factory worker in Germany and in the press section of Fiat Mirafiori. Some claim he was killed because he was in charge of the visiting room and he refused to let some powerful prisoner's girlfriend, mother, or sister, in during visiting hours; others claim he wasn't killed by *Prima Linea* at all but by the mafia, because he was in charge of the kitchens and had a corrupt system by which he made a profit over withdrawing good quality food from the inmates' share and failed to give the mafia its part; yet others claim he was killed, in the logic of terrorist violence, because he was a 'servant of the state'. To those who see the killing in this light Giuseppe Lorusso was a nobody, to be placed in sharp contrast to figures like Aldo Moro and even to the supposedly intellectual killers who killed him. Perhaps none of the stories can fully account for the killing, which came at the height of the time when the prison and prison workers had become important targets of terrorist violence. Nevertheless Giuseppe Lorusso is

one of the dead whose existence challenges Dr. Buffa's idea that the stories from the 1970s may be nonsensical exaggerations, and the absence of Lorusso's voice to tell his own story is jarringly real in its resounding silence.

Giuseppe Lorusso was shot on 19 January 1979 on via Brindisi, just a few meters from his house. He was shot in the head, and in an instant he fell backwards onto the pavement, dressed in his uniform, his car keys still clutched in his hands. Witnesses saw two young men standing over the body, staring at it through masked faces for a few seconds before taking off at high speed in their car, which turned out to be stolen.¹⁸⁸ The first call to arrive claiming the murder-the first one for *Prima Linea* in Turin- rang as follows: 'Here *Prima Linea*, we have killed Giuseppe, servant of the state'. A later message, found in a phone booth near the prison said: 'For the torturer, for the prison personnel who makes himself an instrument of repression, our answer can only be the death penalty'.¹⁸⁹

After the shooting Giuseppe Lorusso's body lay in the street for almost three hours before the authorities finally decided to remove it. It lay rigid on the pavement, covered by a bloody sheet, stared at by neighbours and the inevitable morbid crowd of curious people. Unlike his colleague, Lorenzo Cotugno, who shot back before his murder, Lorusso did not receive a medal of honour from the state. Until recently his name was officially commemorated only by the carved marble stone in the inner courtyard of Le Nuove together with the names of other colleagues killed in service, celebrated once a year with a wreath and a few sentences commending his sacrifice to the state and the suffering of his widow and children.

When trying to know more about what happened to Lorusso, and about the atmosphere of fear and panic that so many interviewees claim made life unliveable in the prison in those years, it is impossible not to notice a shadow in the discussion of his death, a silence and discomfort that begs the question of why he was really killed, and the other insinuated question, which sees a logic and a reason to the actions of the criminal world, a second justice: what had he really done to deserve this?

This section will start to unravel the rumours that I was able to gather surrounding Giuseppe Lorusso's death as a way of addressing the uncomfortable memory of the darkest phase of the *anni di piombo* as it was lived through and

¹⁸⁸ Claudio Giacchino and Ezio Mascarino, 'Un'altra guardia delle carceri uccisa dai terroristi a Torino', *La Stampa*, 19 January 1979.

¹⁸⁹ Giacchino and Mascarino, 'Un'altra guardia delle carceri uccisa dai terroristi a Torino', *ibid*.

imagined by those working in Le Nuove at the time. While no answer will be found regarding the tragic death of the prison guard, this sad episode can be used as a way of touching on the pain, trauma and anger relating to that time. By the very impossibility of getting a clear answer on what happened, this section will expose the complexity of prison memory while also revealing some of its darker sides and manifestations.

Let us examine the first myth about why Lorusso was killed, the one in which he refused to let the girlfriend of a terrorist through the gates.

As far as Lorusso who was also with me, he too was at the door where inmates' relatives came in during the meetings; there was a big influx because the waiting room was small, smaller than this room. And he couldn't, the crowd that was there 1400 inmates today they are two or three hundred, each inmate you couldn't let three family members in, he would let only the minimal indispensable in, the amount that could fit in the waiting room and he too, the Brigadists saw him from the point of view that 'that one let my wife in or my sister he didn't let in' and it happened.

This version of the story sees Lorusso as being killed fundamentally for doing his job. It shows the dangers of the job during that time, when prison guards lamented that 'they can kill us whenever and however they want'¹⁹⁰ and saw themselves as entirely prey to the violence and intimidation of members of the 'bande armate'-armed bands- inside and outside the prison. In this account by the high-ranking prison guard Farina the 'brigatisti' are seen as acting out of personal vengeance because their private needs were not being respected. Politics had nothing to do with this death, according to Farina; it was just about personal power and vengeance.¹⁹¹

Farina used the word "brigatisti" referring to those who ordered the killing even though it was *Prima Linea* and not the Red Brigades that claimed responsibility for the murder. He conflates the different groups into one in memory, providing a summarized and simplified version of history. Farina may have used that term at the time as well, perhaps because he saw very little practical difference between the Red

¹⁹⁰ Claudio Giacchino, 'Rassegnati nel dolore gli agenti del carcere "possono ucciderci quando e come vogliono"', *La Stampa*, 23 January 1979.

¹⁹¹ This view of the right to family visits and to personal space as purely personal ignores the political dimension that the 'terrorists' saw in these acts. Access to personal space, in fact, was to the imprisoned 'terrorists' a highly political question and it was a central point in the demands voiced during the prison riots and the political negotiations that went with them.

Brigades and *Prima Linea* once they were in prison; they may have looked and behaved quite similarly in his eyes. Luigi Guicciardi talked about the conflation of all armed bands into the Red Brigades. He wrote that ‘there had been the “strategic resolutions” of the Red Brigades, in other words of the armed party that had monopolized the attention (and the anguish) of the country, so much so that in common language people no longer say *terrorists* but *brigadists*’.¹⁹² This use of the term ‘brigadists’ to refer to other groups besides the Red Brigades was widespread amongst my informers and shows the level at which the Red Brigades as a group managed to capture and monopolize the public imaginary.¹⁹³

Inspector Farina was not fully comfortable about telling me about the deaths of his colleagues. I asked him if he was still in service at the time of the deaths of Cotugno and Lorusso and his response was: ‘do I have to answer? Now I will ask you (he used the formal form) a question: but will this research be published in some newspaper or is it a thesis?’ I had clearly explained my project to him when I began and repeated that it was for a thesis. I then told him that if there were things that he didn’t want me to write I could leave them out. He was reassured and continued with his story but the concern about these matters being brought to the newspapers may be an indication that some stories are still not out, not yet resolved and that further public inquiries are undesirable. It also suggests that these matters are still unfinished, possibly festering as open wounds.

The second rumour about Lorusso’s death, which points to a mafia trail, is somehow more fulfilling if only because it explains some of the anxiety and hesitation about delving too deep into this particular past. One informant, which I will call H., said about the death of Lorusso: ‘eh...it’s that I can’t say yet, I can’t say’ then he immediately shifted into a whisper and said ‘there are things behind it, very big things, that can be said only in thirty years time (...) there were other things

¹⁹² Luigi Guicciardi, *Il tempo del furore: Il fallimento della lotta armata raccontato dai protagonisti*, Rusconi, Milan, 1988, p.6.

¹⁹³ This included the imaginary of the other armed bands that would emulate them or try to match or surpass them. Susanna Ronconi commented about the difference between the group of *Prima Linea* women she belonged to and the Red Brigade women. They all had a regime of study inside the prison but she commented laughingly that the Red Brigade women were more ‘Stalinist’ when they studied, they worked much longer hours on more serious texts while supposedly the *Prima Linea* women had a more humane approach to their work. On this point see also Raimondo Catanzaro, ‘Subjective Experience and Objective Reality: an account of violence in the words of its protagonists’ pp. 174-203, *The Red Brigades and Left-wing Terrorism in Italy*, Raimondo Catanzaro (ed.), Pinter Publishers, London, 1991, p.198.

underneath but really too short a time has passed, I can really end up in prison, these things are too delicate and true let's say, there certainly were some very ...moments...ah...some of my colleagues asked to leave the prison. I said no, still the line 'do no evil fear no evil' why should I leave?' Here informer H. suggests that only those who 'did evil' had to worry during the *anni di piombo* in prison, implying that those who died had engaged in activities that led directly to their deaths. Later in the interview H. made me turn off the camera and told me, whispering and looking over his shoulder although he was in the privacy of his own home, that Lorusso had been working in the kitchens and had been keeping the best food to sell outside, instead of giving it to the prisoners. He was supposed to give a percentage of the profits to the mafia but instead he kept it for himself and supposedly the mafia shot him and then blamed *Prima Linea*.

Another prison guard's account gives credence to this story. Spatafora said: 'Lorusso...Lorusso's story there talks about *Prima Linea*, the public prosecutor's office talks of *Prima Linea* and there too he was in the kitchen for the inmates, he worked there and then...(pause) maybe there something happened that I don't know, but anyway they killed him.' Spatafora's story supports the secret story revealed by H. in two ways. First of all Spatafora sees Lorusso's death as having a 'story', told by the courts but not necessarily accepted by him; his account seems to blame Lorusso's death on his having worked in the kitchens. Secondly Spatafora pauses in the middle of explaining that Lorusso worked in the kitchens and seems to hold himself back by saying that perhaps something that he doesn't know happened there. We could read this last statement in light of the very Italian concept of *omertà*, suggesting that Spatafora knows the rumour full well but prefers to keep silent under the protective mask of ignorance. Combining Spatafora's 'slip' and H.'s anxiety and hesitation at revealing the rumour about Lorusso's death makes the story resonate with some truth-value, at least as an explanation that circulated amongst members of the prison staff.

Beryl Bellman argues that secrecy is much more than the simple 'process of keeping other people from obtaining information you do not want them to have' but that secrecy is a process which should be conceptualised in light of the ways 'concealed information is withheld, restricted, intentionally altered and exposed'¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴Beryl Bellman, *The Language of Secrecy: Symbols and Metaphors in Poro Ritual*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, N.J., 1984, pp.139 and 144.

Bellman argues that 'secrets can be treated as texts by describing the different message forms that are used to communicate in an indirect or adumbrated manner'.¹⁹⁵ H. protested extensively when he revealed his secret about Lorusso and by stressing the danger and importance of the secret he nevertheless tried to keep it within the protected sphere of hidden information. Spatafora simply suggested to me that a secret existed which he could not reveal, and by doing so he was indirectly suggesting that the official story was not fully true, though he did not want to be the one to tell me so. In both cases none of this secret information needed to be exposed at all, but my informants presented it to me, however partially, as something they could offer, which also framed them as being 'in the know', part of a group which I was excluded from. In this sense the secret surrounding Lorusso's death constitutes an 'inner property' for my informants, to use Georg Simmel's term¹⁹⁶ and it has exchange value within the secrecy economy set in motion by our interview. My informants offered me their secrets, which challenged the official view of Lorusso's death, in exchange for my taking them seriously and acknowledging their status as insiders. The way this information was provided, however, still protected the secret from being revealed completely and thus also kept its exchange value high.

The rumour about Giuseppe Lorusso having been killed by the mafia rather than *Prima Linea* is not allowed to emerge in public discourse not only because it is a dangerous narrative (since the culprits could retaliate against those who break the wall of omertà) but possibly because it comes to interrupt the flow of narratives about the *anni di piombo* by drastically introducing an element belonging to more 'normal' prison history. In the glamorised and dramatic stories of the violence prison guards had to fear in those years, the story of Lorusso having been killed for being a 'servant of the state' is a key narrative element.

The accounts of Lorusso's death provided by prison guards are very different from the ones given by outsiders such as the priest Padre Ruggero, one of the prison teachers Riccardo Contini or even by the witnesses to his murder whose statements were reported in *La Stampa* on the day of his death. To them Lorusso is primarily a victim, made all the more striking because of his particular condition as a southern Italian immigrant to Turin.

¹⁹⁵ Bellman, *Language of Secrecy*, ibid p.53.

¹⁹⁶ Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of George Simmel*, Free Press, Glencoe, 1950, p.332.

The prison chaplain Padre Ruggero describes the incident of Lorusso's death dedicating only one word to him as a person, the word 'poveretto'-poor soul-, otherwise he refers to him as 'il morto'-the deceased, the corpse. Padre Ruggero's account of the death of Lorusso is mostly focused on his own traffic difficulties in reaching the body, in which he was obstructed first by the prison authorities who did not want anybody to leave the prison after the killing, and then by crowds of demonstrators whom he yelled at and forced to let him go through: 'Once I reached the underpass of the Royal Palace, I ran into a multitude of demonstrators who were blocking that passage. I got out of the car and, yelling to cover their voices, I explained that I had to reach the deceased/the corpse still in the middle of the road. They immediately allowed me to pass and thus I reached that poor soul.' Padre Ruggero then tells about helping out Lorusso's family and immediately shifts his story to the president of the region Aldo Viglione who asked him to tell his secretary to bring money because 'relatives from the South will be coming and this family will have to bear the expense of hosting them'.

Lorusso as a person and possible colleague of Padre Ruggero, whom he must have known at least superficially, is ignored by Padre Ruggero who instead focuses his attention on the obliviousness of demonstrators and the generosity of the president of the region, who took pity on the poverty of Lorusso's southern Italian family. One could wonder whether the presence of the demonstrators in this story, a detail which Padre Ruggero recounts every time he talks about Lorusso, may have some deeper symbolic significance, almost as if Padre Ruggero were reproaching them for setting in motion events and sentiments which led to Lorusso's murder. Thus 'il morto'-the deceased/the corpse would almost be used here as a reproach.

Riccardo Contini, who once taught technical education in the prison, recalled his deep pain at going to Lorusso's funeral. He said:

What duties this poor man- an immigrant- what duties? What victory for those who killed him? (...) In my opinion he had no power. What power could he have? (...) Why poor Lorusso? He could not have done anything! Maybe to spread terror but there was no reason for it. That poor guy, what sense could it make? There was also the common criminality charged on the shoulders of the Red Brigades. I stayed then until the recovery of Aldo Moro's body. To confuse Aldo Moro with Lorusso is a comparison that doesn't hold (...). But the poor Lorusso, what the hell could that poor man have done?

This passage of Riccardo Contini's interview is particularly rich in implied assumptions and judgments. To him the death of Lorusso was disturbing in its meaninglessness because he had no power; he was a 'poveretto', a 'pover'uomo', and an immigrant at that.

This passage also reflects a position, quite common especially amongst leftists at the time,¹⁹⁷ which to some degree accepted the logic of terrorist violence, while condemning it. Contini, in fact, sets up a contrast between killing Aldo Moro (an act which could be seen as having a political purpose) and the meaninglessness of killing someone as powerless as Lorusso. Lorusso's death didn't fit within any political logic and it is therefore striking that Contini immediately inserts the phrase about how common delinquency started getting mixed in with the Red Brigades (Again there is a conflation of *Prima Linea* into the more dominant Red Brigade label which did not in this case have anything to do with the murder) almost to separate delinquent killers from those who had a more explicit political mission.

Gian Carlo Caselli and Donatella Dalla Porta write about the utilitarian alliance, which had to be struck in the latest phase of Red Brigade activity between the Red Brigades and more traditional criminality:

...Trapped between state repression on one hand, and a progressive reduction of possible initial sympathies on the other, the BR found themselves increasingly entrapped in actions to defend the organization. The need for financing forced the terrorists to take part in acts of petty banditism, which exposed them to armed clashes with the police and dangerous competition with the 'malavita'-the underworld (when it was not actually colluding with organized crime), further discrediting the image of the organization.¹⁹⁸

Contini, in his outrage at the killing of Giuseppe Lorusso, seems to be grappling with precisely that tension, with a sort of disappointment that an organization like the Red Brigades should lose coherence and fall into petty criminality, killing a man for no symbolic reason, or perhaps to serve the needs of purely criminal organizations. Although he suggested that killing Aldo Moro certainly had more meaning than killing Giuseppe Lorusso, Contini explained that he

¹⁹⁷ Leonardo Sciascia was strongly criticized for having said, the day after the Moro kidnapping, that he was 'nè con le BR, nè con questo Stato'- neither with the Red Brigades nor with this State' a sentiment shared by large segments of the left, deeply dissatisfied with the Democratic Christian regime.

¹⁹⁸ Gian Carlo Caselli and Donatella Dalla Porta 'History of the Red Brigades' in Raimondo Catanzaro (ed), *The Red Brigades and Left-wing Terrorism in Italy*, Pinter, London, 1991, p. 104.

left the job at the prison shortly after Moro's assassination, out of fear but perhaps also as a way of distancing himself from that event, which was deeply traumatic and experienced as a turning point by many, an event which saw a rapid erosion of even the tacit support for the armed organizations.¹⁹⁹

At a different point in the interview Riccardo Contini said: 'I saw the BR 15 m from me and behind this cape ('dietro a questo mantello') the boys almost without beard with machineguns in hand. That's another reason why I left-I didn't want a monument to my memory.' This last image conveys the sense of personal danger that Riccardo Contini felt he experienced during his time as a prison teacher, and his lack of faith in the state's ability to protect him. It is unclear what the 'cape' he is referring to is, it sounds almost like the curtain in a theatre, revealing a famous scene. Strikingly, Giorgio Bocca used exactly the same image of policemen without beard when he was describing the red brigade trial in *Il terrorismo Italiano 1970-1980*.²⁰⁰ He wrote that 'the State is the one that is with his carabinieri without a beard planted like the toy soldiers of the Sardinian king in front of the cage of the terrorists of which they don't understand a single word.' This image of the policemen or prison guards without beards frames them as helpless, inexperienced and somehow left to their own devices by the state that is also indirectly helpless in the face of terrorism. The policemen and prison guards are described not as men, but as boys. Lorusso instead is a 'pover'uomo', the unlucky one, who presumably would get a 'monumento alla memoria' - a monument in his memory.

Lorusso was also seen as a "poveretto"-poor fellow, at the time of his death, by the witnesses who reported what they saw of the killing to *La Stampa*: 'two young men-witnesses report- one was wearing a big light brown jacket, wearing

¹⁹⁹ Aldo Moro's death was presented to me as a turning point by several of my informants, not only during these interviews but also for my previous project on the memory of Southern Italian immigration to Turin where one of my informants saw Moro's death as marking the end of a season of empowerment for factory workers and the beginning of the end of the 'classe operaia'-the working class. There is a very rich literature on the Aldo Moro murder case and its meaning, significance and consequence. For a general account of the killing see: Richard Drake, *The Aldo Moro Murder Case*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1995. For a further discussion of the complex web of media and political discourses surrounding the Moro kidnapping at the time see Robin Erica Wagner-Pacifi, *The Moro Morality Play. Terrorism as Social Drama*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1986. Also very interesting are a series of interviews conducted at the factory gates with Turin workers during the 55 days of Moro's captivity. See: Bruno Mantelli and Marco Revelli, *Operai senza politica. Il caso Moro alla Fiat e il "qualunquismo operaio". Le risposte degli operai allo Stato e alle BR registrate ai cancelli della Fiat durante i 55 giorni del rapimento di Aldo Moro*, Savelli, Rome, 1979.

²⁰⁰ Giorgio Bocca, *Il terrorismo Italiano 1970-1980*, Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, Milan, 1981, p.126.

balaclavas. Both of them stayed for a few seconds to look at *that poor fellow* fallen backwards on the asphalt, then they got on their '131' inside which there were two other people. The car started and sped away extremely fast'.²⁰¹ *La Stampa* did not include an image of Lorusso's face, as it might have appeared smiling in uniform or with his family, the way is often done with articles depicting murder victims. The title on the day of his death read 'another prison guard killed by terrorists in Turin', for *La Stampa* Lorusso was just another guard.



(Fig.9) The newspaper chose to show a picture of Lorusso's body on the asphalt, covered by a white sheet. The image confirms the sense of Lorusso as a 'poveretto', whose life was interrupted by the onslaught of forces moving rapidly above him, who came and shot him in cold blood, leaving him frozen and helpless on the ground. This image must have resonated with the public for its association with images depicting mafia killings, where the victim is often shown under a white sheet, thus linking this particular terrorist act to

more traditional criminality, a link which clearly emerged from Riccardo Contini's interview.

I have not fully addressed the documents found in the phone booth claiming responsibility for Lorusso's death, and the statements about him being a servant of the state and a 'torturer' that I reported on above. In the edited volume *La Mappa Perduta*, a sociological study written by ex members of armed bands and based on their own accounts as well as on the legal accounts of their trials, the entry discussing *Prima Linea* activities reads: 'On the 19th of January 1979, in Turin, the prison guard Giuseppe Lorusso is mortally wounded'.²⁰² This statement coldly gives credence to the official version in which *Prima Linea* did indeed target and kill Lorusso, perhaps

²⁰¹ Claudio Giacchino, Ezio Mascarino, 'Un'altra guardia delle carceri uccisa dai terroristi a Torino', *La Stampa* 19 January, 1979.

²⁰² Progetto Memoria, *La Mappa Perduta*, Sensibili alle foglie, Rome, 1994, p.66. *Prima Linea*'s responsibility for Lorusso's murder is further confirmed by Luigi Guicciardi, *Il tempo del furore. Il fallimento della lotta armata raccontato dai protagonisti*, Rusconi, Milan, 1988, which briefly mentions Lorusso's killing pp. 24-25.

really only as a symbol of the state, or perhaps out of a real grievance born in the prison. Perhaps Lorusso was part of the *squadretta* with the task of punishing rebellious prisoners, or he was simply disliked for his role in the visiting room as suggested by the guard Farina. That *Prima Linea* does indeed seem to claim responsibility for the murder does not necessarily discredit the rumour about Lorusso being eliminated by the mafia since it is plausible that the two illegal organizations may have had dealings with each other. Even if that were not the case the mafia rumour restores logic to a death, which would otherwise truly seem absurd and may help guards and prison workers handle the remembered anxieties and fears of that time.

In box 299 of the prison archive there is an anonymous letter written the day after Lorusso's killing and mailed to the main office of the prison guards:

Turin 20-1-1979

In the face of these repeated criminal acts against the guards who pay service in the Turin prison, I ask myself what you yourselves are thinking and what are the initiatives you intend to take. On my part I suggest to you: why don't you demand to be escorted from your homes to your work place? At least those of you who take service in the morning? I see that downstairs from me there is a military man who comes to pick a man up every morning. Can't you also ask for a protection service? And if your homes were under surveillance in certain hours of the day, might that not be a reason or an occasion to catch these killers? I am a common citizen that wants to express his solidarity to your humble work of honest people. My name doesn't matter.²⁰³

This letter gives us a sense of the emotional response, which Lorusso's killing (and its depiction in the press) must have elicited. The terms 'lavoro umile di gente onesta', humble work of honest people- is pregnant with associations rife with stereotypes of both immigrants and the working poor. It stands in sharp contrast to the story about Lorusso running a criminal racket aimed at stealing food from often quite destitute prisoners.

With time, it is the version that focuses on Lorusso as a humble honest man, which has stuck the most. Every year a service attended by the mayor (or his representatives), by classes of high school students from the 'Liceo Maiorana', by ex prison guards, and ex partisans commemorates the death of Giuseppe Lorusso in the

²⁰³ Letter of the 22.1.79 to the Commander of the Turin Judiciary Guards, box 229 atti vari per il maresciallo comandante, Fondo 'Casa Circondariale di Torino 'Le Nuove', Archivio di Stato, Turin.

courtyard of the prison. At the service his children are asked to put up a new wreath under the marble monument listing the names of the guards who were killed in the line of duty. There is usually a choir of alpine soldiers and ex partisans who sing songs of the Resistance. This ceremony thus links Lorusso not only to the other men who died in service but also to resistance fighters seen to have died 'per la libertà'- for freedom. Once a year then Lorusso is not only celebrated as an honest man (all bad rumours dispelled) but as a hero who died for the state, a martyr whose memory must be honoured and tended to, along with the memory of other fallen heroes.

THE EX-PRISON GUARD CLUB



Fig.10-Yearly Prison guard festivity dinner in basement cells, circa 1956

A few days after our interview, the old marshal Carmelo Parente gave me an appointment in the officer's club at the far end of a narrow corridor to the left of the main entrance of the prison. Until the renovation works reach this wing of the prison, retired prison guards are allowed to gather once a fortnight in a tiny room in the old officer's quarters in the prison. The club is not open to the female guards, and it consists of retired male guards mostly in their mid to late sixties. When they meet they play 'briscola', joke around, and fill the small square room with the smoke of cigarettes lit one after the other, and of cigars that produce a thick sour scent. I imagine that the old guards like coming here because it is an almost secret place, secluded from the world (and from their wives) and they must enjoy the privilege of having restricted access to the old fortress-dark and gloomy as it may be- after all they could easily meet in somebody's house and have coffee in the 'salotto buono',²⁰⁴ instead.

The room where the prison guards' club meets gives the feeling of a bachelor's den from the 1950s and when I arrive I see the small group of men laughing loudly as they toss cards onto a green felt tablecloth- a sign of serious card playing. Carmelo Parente asks if any of his colleagues are willing to be interviewed by me, the 'dottoressa che viene dall'Inghilterra'. Three guards raise their hands as if

²⁰⁴ Literally: 'The good living room' a place in the house whose main purpose is display and entertainment, but which is regarded with particular care and perhaps not particularly used on a daily basis by the inhabitants of a house.

in a classroom and I thank them and take their telephone number. One older man shakes his head and looks irritated about something; he was not amongst those who raised their hands so I smile at him and ask whether he too might like to be interviewed. He doesn't look at me as he answers, quite briskly; 'absolutely not!' and then he grumbles that it might be against the law and that the others should be careful about what they tell me. Silence follows. Some of the guards who gave me their number look down as if having second thoughts. I decide to change the subject and ask them what card game they are playing and how often they have been coming here. They relax a bit and smile and they make jokes about one of the guards who always loses. They offer me a cup of coffee but I refuse since they are intent in their game and I ask if they mind if I have a look around, at their walls that are covered in pictures and newspaper clippings.

There are pictures of celebrations, of soccer games between inmates and guards, of dinners held in the main corridor of the prison. Many of the pictures show groups of guards in uniform, rows of almost identical men with chubby faces and dark eyebrows, looking serious under their grey/brown hats, some kneeling down like in football line-ups. Parente stands beside me as I inspect the room and he points me to two of his poems on the wall, one is about the 'festa degli agenti di custodia' the celebration of the prison guards, and the other is about the Italian flag. The language and imagery he uses suggest quite strongly that he went to school during the Fascist era and has not developed distaste for words such as 'ardour', 'valour', 'heroic sacrifice' and 'fatherland'.

Carmelo Parente is a short man with beady green eyes and a long straight scar that crosses his cheek, an un-natural looking wrinkle amongst the other wrinkles in his pink, sun-dried face. He says it was made by a slash from a prisoner's razor blade in an attack, which occurred during one of Parente's early assignments in a prison in Sicily. The story of the slash is unusual since Parente openly described using violence against a prisoner, when he confronted an armed man who had lost control and was threatening his colleagues.

Parente did mention in passing that he would often get in trouble with one of the judges for isolating prisoners in an old fashioned way. He said:

During the prison reform I was there and I wasn't there. They were about to apply it, and actually I had some squabbles with the judge because I used the old set of rules, in other words if an inmate commits a crime, punches a guard

in the eye, I would put him in the cell waiting to give a report (...) and once this judge called me and told me 'Marshall! But you keep putting inmates in cell, in punishment!'

By describing this habit in the framework of a procedure, a simple response to violence, Parente disguised his own violent behaviour towards inmates. The punishment cells were horrific places down in the basement where inmates were strapped down, probably not in the gentlest of manners. In their fascinating work on police torturers and murderers in Brazilian prisons Martha Huggins, Mika Haritos-Fatouros and Philip Zimbardo noticed that 'The institutional functionary's discourse about violence renders both his violence and his police organization's relationship to it relatively invisible. By discursively embedding his violence within a complicated bureaucracy, the institutional functionary erases the personal role of official perpetrators of state-sponsored atrocities'.²⁰⁵ While the violence that occurred in Le Nuove in no way compares to the atrocities committed in Brazil during the dirty war, the mechanisms for talking about and hiding violence are quite similar to those relating to the 'violence workers' in Brazil. This masking of violence did not only occur during interviews but glimpses of it can be found in the prison archives as well. For example I found a report by the prison doctor which stated: 'inmate C.G. presents suspect fracture of the nasal bone, a small fracture on the back of the nose, pain in the left wrist and swelling of the right knee. The nature of such lesions are obscure.' Attached to this report is another document reporting that the inmate fell from a bed in the warehouse. The report states that 'the inmate claims to have been beaten by the guards' but the person filing the report denies this and suggests that he 'be punished for 'defamation'.²⁰⁶ The lesions in the patient and the fact that the doctor reported their source as 'obscure' sound plausibly like lesions one would get from a beating (the wrist pain could for example suggest that the inmate raised his arm to protect himself), though of course the report could be legitimate. I could find no reports of beatings by guards in the prison archive. Ambiguous reports of the kind just reported however are quite common and may constitute a bureaucratic masking of violence.

²⁰⁵ Martha Huggins, Mika Haritos-Fatouros, and Philip Zimbardo, *Violence Workers: Police Torturers and Murderers Reconstruct Brazilian Atrocities*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2002, pp. 128-129.

²⁰⁶ Box 6673, Fondo Casa Circondariale di Torino 'Le Nuove', Archivio di Stato, Turin.

During my interviews with guards there were several occasions in which the conversation hinted at the use of violence by prison guards, but a direct discussion of violence was continuously avoided.²⁰⁷ The guards I interviewed always chose to focus on the stories of violence against them, as in Parente's slash on the face and on the stories of their assassinated colleagues since those are stories that clearly elicit sympathy towards them as well as framing them as active participants in a famous moment in the prison's history.

On the wall next to Parente's poems I notice the picture of Lorenzo Cotugno, one of the prison guards who was shot by the Red Brigades in the late 1970s. He is a stout man with thick dark hair and a serious gaze. Parente points at Cotugno and tells me that he got a gold medal for fighting back against the terrorists. Then he adds that 'I too was on the list of the Red Brigades, they had identified me'. Then one of the other guards chips in and says 'bad times, bad memories, we have been through so much! Bad times, let's hope that they don't come back!' a murmur of agreement rises from the rest of the guards. Another guard adds, it's not clear if addressing me or the others 'yes, they got Cotugno and Lorusso and those policemen outside of the walls, and then they also shot at the doctor, the doctor Romano and the 'vigilatrice'- the female guard- we were scared to go outside, we would always check from the window before going outside.' One of the guards who had agreed to be interviewed interrupts and asks me: 'but are you also interested in this? I don't like talking about that time.' Then he tells me that if we do talk about it he doesn't want me to use his name because 'you know, the Red Brigades are coming back.' As if just talking about that time would expose them to the wrath of these invisible enemies. The following section will examine the memory of the death of Lorenzo Cotugno, whose death is frozen in shared myth and was to all a lot more predictable than the puzzling death of Giuseppe Lorusso.

²⁰⁷ I briefly analyse one such instance in the chapter on the Church in which prison guard Romano's wife began discussing Romano's role in the *squadretta* and was interrupted by a story about Padre Ruggero.

THE GOLD MEDAL

The Death of Lorenzo Cotugno



Fig.11 -Lorenzo Cotugno

While there are very many versions of why Giuseppe Lorusso was killed, all those I interviewed agreed that Lorenzo Cotugno was killed 'for his particular attitude towards inmates' and because he was 'ligio al dovere'- dutiful, which in the context of the times was presented as a fault. Nobody wonders out loud 'why him!' and the story of his murder is retold in a sequence of details which is remarkably similar in each of his colleagues' recollections. The main feature of the story, which they all insist on telling me, is that if he hadn't been armed, Cotugno would still be alive today, that he brought about his own death by his own over-zealous nature. Teodoro Romano recalls:

Cotugno did service during the visiting hours in fact he was a gunsmith in other words he kept the weapons, he was a kind of weapon holder Cotugno, and he always went around armed because if Cotugno hadn't been armed by now he would also be alive because they had only kneecapped him, he didn't fall immediately, he reacted, he shot, he hit one of the delinquents of those people there and he wounded him badly so they came back and they shot him in the head. The guard Lorusso they shot him in the head, he was destined that guy.

Cotugno's habit of being an 'armaiolo'-a gun bearer- is what does him in and seals his destiny and this is at once a part of his character and a part of his role on the job which was not liked by 'terrorists'.

Salvatore Spatafora also focuses on the detail of Cotugno's kneecapping:

(...) When they killed our colleague Cotugno...I remember...do you know Cotugno's story? That he reacted, and he hit one of the attackers who was then arrested, that's why when he hit the aggressor they pounced back on him, the brigades they wized up and then the woman shot him in the head, and he was already on the sidewalk they had only kneecapped him and the people said that he was already kneecapped, shot in the legs, he reacted and they did him in.

It is striking that both Spatafora and Romano use quite brutal terms such as 'fatto fuori'-did him in- and 'l'hanno sparato in testa'-they shot him in the head- in describing the murder of their colleague. Perhaps the strong language helps them distance themselves from an event which must have been deeply traumatic, so that the simple assertion of their colleagues' brutal death functions almost as a protective screen to avoid reaching into the pain that this memory may cause them.

The guard Carmelo Parente's story is also similar though it frames Cotugno in more heroic terms and focuses on the gold medal he won for his self-sacrifice:

Lorusso was a good prison guard. Cotugno too but he was dutiful (ligio al dovere). Cotugno had received death threats. I too was on the list to be eliminated and I found out from the investigative unit of the carabinieri. I was on the list I don't remember if of *Prima Linea* or The Red Brigades. So when I found out I asked to have a weapon permit for personal reasons and they authorized it but I never took the weapon with me. Because then Cotugno, if he hadn't had the weapon now would be alive because they only wanted to kneecap him. When he left the house he always went down with the pouch and the gun in his hand. While he was coming out of the elevator they shot him in the leg and while he fell back he shot at one of the terrorists so then the other one, the one that was in the car, came back and finished him off. But then he took his friend to the hospital and from there the judges were able to track down all the Brigadists in Turin. That's why they gave Cotugno the gold medal while they didn't give it to Lorusso.

The recollections presented above by Spatafora, Parente and Romano are strikingly similar though they partially contradict each other in the details. While Parente's story shares the main points with both Spatafora and Romano's stories, there are two key differences in the details between these stories. The first difference

lies in the description of the place where Cotugno got shot: Parente talks about him being shot in the elevator of his building, which would presumably locate his final executions a few meters away from the elevator, still in the entrance of his building, or else it would attribute Cotugno extremely heroic forces, since opening doors and walking down steps and then well onto the sidewalk with several bullets in the legs is not a small feat. Spatafora describes Cotugno dying on the sidewalk where he was already lying when 'the woman' came back to shoot him in the head.

The second difference is that Spatafora sees Cotugno as passive, perhaps even foolish, killed off on the pavement, and by a woman at that! Romano also sees Cotugno as dying because of his reckless inclination to carry guns. They make no mention of the gold medal or of the arrests of 'all the Red Brigades in Turin', which Parente sees as a direct consequence of Cotugno's fighting back. Parente became a marshal while Romano and Spatafora remained lower ranking prison officers. Parente takes great pride in his rank and we might assume that he would also place more importance on a gold medal than his colleagues. Parente may also have a stronger identification with Cotugno since he himself also saw himself as a target of the terrorists and had asked permission to carry a weapon.

Inspector Farina recalls that Cotugno was in charge of the visiting room at the time that glass partitions were introduced and replaced the more familiar tables from which relatives and inmates used to be able to touch each other while having their meetings. Relatives and inmates alike were deeply upset about the change and refused to accept it, so there were often fights and arguments between the visitors and inmates and the guards in charge of their visiting session. Cotugno was said not to have had great tact in handling the prisoners. Farina recalls:

He wasn't ba...let's say he wasn't a violent type, he wasn't, he was fairly balanced it was just that the Brigadists didn't accept his way of reacting, his way of working...for example the visiting room held more than thirty people couldn't go in, if I go do the shopping today they have a number system, instead the first who arrived took little tickets and the first 32 would enter the visiting room and as the others arrived they would form another group, the first would go out and the others would go in. Let's say that he, to come in dialogue between him and the family members or with the inmates he wasn't...he didn't talk much.

Farina's strange slip about 'ba...' ('catt...' in which he corrected himself and didn't want to say the word 'cattivo') may suggest a restrained need to portray Cotugno in

neutral tones when his character may perhaps have been stronger and more aggressive towards inmates than Farina is willing to let on.

Informer H. told me another secret story about Cotugno, again told in a whisper and forcing me to turn off my recording equipment. While conveying this story H. seemed quite proud to have this inside information and he even looked a bit consciously defiant for debunking the myth of Cotugno as a hero. He called him 'quello li'-'that guy', a term that conveys a sense of distancing on the part of the speaker. According to H. Cotugno had been part of the hooded '*squadretta*' of prison guards who went into prisoner cells at night to beat them up.

Newspapers from the time periodically reported complaints by family members and the prison right's association the Lega Non Violenta per i Detenuti -the non-violent league for inmates- about precisely that type of nighttime aggression, which they claimed were occurring in retaliation for some of the prisoner protests. One article reports, together with the violence against prisoners in the cells, a complaint by the organization *Controsbarre* directly addressed at Cotugno: 'We intend to ask for the lance-corporal Cotugno, responsible for visits with relatives, to be sent away from that appointment. His behaviour is unbearable, provocative. The wife of Violante (...) had the judge's authorization to have an extended meeting and he, it's not clear based on which authority, denied it to her with a defiant attitude. Protests were useless'.²⁰⁸ This article confirms Cotugno's aggressive attitude and inability to communicate with family members, as suggested by Farina in a passage I quoted earlier in this chapter, and these tensions could have also manifested themselves in his own personal grievances with particular inmates which could also have led him to participate in the violent night squads.

My institutional informants usually denied the existence of beating squads. When I asked inspector Farina about them and about whether the rumour that Cotugno was part of them was true he immediately said 'there weren't any, there weren't any' but then he continued and said:

He wasn't part of it. I can say really no, he wasn't part of this 'hooding' (incappucciamento, literally translated wearing a hood) it was just his way of being, he didn't have dialogue, it isn't that he didn't have dialogue, you got here first and first you go, you came here later, and later you go in. At the end of the visiting time he yelled 'visiting time is up' and then when the visit

²⁰⁸ See 'Spedizioni punitive in cella di "pestatori" incappucciati', *Stampa Sera*, 23 Sept. 1976.

is going on what happens? 'But a minute, I just need to say the last word' nothing with him, finished, finished.²⁰⁹

Farina seems to accept that the 'hooding' happened although he denies that Cotugno took part in it. 'Questo incappucciamento' remains in the background as a possibility, not fully dispelled but also never openly recognized. An article from 1980 reports an interview with the prison director Surace who said that: 'the blanket and the corridor are episodes that I try to avoid and I think I have managed'. The journalist then writes: 'some inmates are of a different opinion. The "blanket" is the one that guards throw on an inmate in his cell as not to be recognized and to soften the noise of the blows while they beat him; the "corridor" is the double row of prison guards between which the inmate is forced to pass getting beaten along the way.'²¹⁰ The fact that Surace even mentions these two practices as things he is 'trying to avoid' suggests that this type of violence was quite widespread in the prison, at least up to 1980 and that both techniques had been endemic means of maintaining order in the prison.

The *squadretta* must have played a crucial part in prison management although its existence is kept secret in interviews with outsiders such as myself. Over and over Le Nuove was described as "ingovernabile"-ungovernable- in those years, directors refused to go there so that on several occasions the prison director would be based in a different prison and would just come down at regular intervals, never staying in the prison very long. Newspapers reported about this in sensationalized terms²¹¹ playing on a sense of crisis in the prison to sell papers. One article said about Le Nuove that it was 'the most dangerous prison in Italy and the most targeted by terrorists (two guards killed by BR and *Prima Linea*, a doctor and a female guard (...) wounded by 'commandos' just a few days ago). The prison is also a point of

²⁰⁹ Here, like in Lorusso's case, there seems to be some acceptance of the logic of terrorist violence, which Farina sees as explained by Cotugno's behaviour.

²¹⁰ Lietta Tornabuoni, 'Vita e morte alle carceri Nuove', *La Stampa*, 29 June 1980. The practice of the 'corridoio' became infamous after the demonstrations in Genova in July 2001 when demonstrators taken to the police station in Bolzaneto were apparently subjected to it. See for example the report of the charges against those involved in Il Manifesto-g8 <http://www.ilmanifesto.it/g8/dopogenova/3f6f0a719a4bb.html> (visited 26 September 2005).

²¹¹ See for example Claudio Giacchino 'Senza direttore il carcere più colpito dai terroristi' 11 February, 1979. An earlier sense of Le Nuove's ungovernability: 'Le Nuove ingovernabili', *La Stampa*, 19 November 1977. And as an example of the many articles on the collapse of the justice system see Claudio Cerasuolo, 'La paralisi della giustizia', *La Stampa*, 8 January 1977.

passage for terrorists facing trial'.²¹² In that context of 'ungovernability' the *squadretta* played a key role as a deterrent against protests, as a way of promoting fear and breaking prisoners psychologically, reasserting guard power in response to tensions accumulated between prisoners and guards. The need to rely on the beating squad was also a sign of weakness for the guards who were not able to maintain order by ordinary means.

The *squadretta* represented the hidden face of prison authoritarian power, all the more disturbing because those in charge denied its existence and it left prisoners in a state of frustrated helplessness, aware more than ever of their vulnerability at the hands of prison authorities, of their exposure, afraid that the team of beaters may show up again on a different night. Nanni Balestrini provides an account of an attack of the *squadretta* in his book *Gli Invisibili*, unofficially based on interviews with political prisoners from the 1970s. Although it is a work of fiction, it can be read as providing the inmate perspective on the experience of the *squadretta* and a powerful example of the mechanisms, which may have contributed to making prison guards like Cotugno into targets of terrorist violence.

Balestrini's passage, written without punctuation, begins in the evening when an inmate starts calling for a guard to come see him. The guard seems to be ignoring him and the inmate who is calling raises his voice more and more and begins kicking the door of his cell, which echoes very loudly down the corridor:

this guy screams kicks curses and calls maybe he is feeling ill he calls the guard maybe because he is sick I am shocked and uncertain if I should do something I don't hear any other noises besides the noise made by this one and I hear that all the others must be keeping quiet because I don't hear other voices other sounds from the other cells I am undecided instinctively I feel that I should start banging too because if that one is calling with such insistence there must be a reason but I am surprised that nobody else does it while I am there undecided if I too should start hitting the metal door I hear a quick shuffling of feet in the corridor of steps that run fast many steps like a group of people running along the corridor it's easy to imagine them because the corridor is empty and all the sounds reverberate amplified.

Then the noise of steps stops a few cells after mine and I hear the door being opened the shrieks of that one increase but now they are different shrieks they are like shrieks of fear but I still can't understand what he is saying then I hear some confused noises some very loud shrieks of pain and I suddenly understand that they are beating him now together with the voice that is screaming more and more loud I hear other voices and muffled blows against the walls they are beating him there is no doubt the whole thing lasts a lot or at least it seems that way to me because all

²¹² Claudio Giacchino 'Arriverà un direttore alle Nuove (ma il Ministero non dice quando), da Roma si ottengono solo vaghe assicurazioni' *La Stampa*, 5 February 1979.

those noises that I hear make me think that they keep hitting him that they never stop hitting him and that they are many hitting him and I imagine a group of guards there hitting a man in that hole and hitting each other in order to hit him inside the little space there is

Then the noises and the blows suddenly stop I hear two or three voices speaking out loud they talk among themselves and a continuous moan then slamming the gate and the door with a very loud bang that echoes in the corridor then nothing for a few minutes then some metal noises it's the spy holes that are opened for a few seconds and then slammed they are doing a round of the cells and they open the spy holes I hear the one before mine then they open mine (...) The spy hole comes down a face a young and dark face with wide open eyes popping out of his head that in the first moment seems like the head guard but isn't the head guard it's another guy he too with dark skin and black eyes but younger the face all sweaty looks in a moment shocked excited by the beating it looks me straight in the eyes for a second with rolling eyes then the spy hole is slammed and a hatred rises with the blood in the head the feeling a feeling that I had never felt a feeling of hatred a very violent desire to kill of wanting to kill instantly immediately of something that I didn't know but it was a very violent desire to squash to beat that face to murder

If Cotugno really was part of the beating team his murder-though apparently only meant to be a kneecapping- can be seen and explained as the outside response to the violence being exerted from within, a violence which had always been part of the structures of prison power but which the 'terrorists' would not accept. As in Balestrini's passage Cotugno would have been hated not only for his individual action, but also for his participation in something bigger, a violence in which he was just one eager pawn, almost indistinguishable from his fellow guards.

At the end of my interview with Farina his eyes widened and he asked me if I had spoken to H. When I hesitated and said yes he grinned widely and said, almost to himself 'he sure does talk a lot that one, doesn't he?' Taken aback and feeling that I had made a mistake in telling him that I had spoken to H. I probably confirmed Farina's suspicions that H. had revealed the secret rumour of Cotugno taking part in the squadretta. Farina's body language conveyed a combination of hidden anger and a sort of satisfied pride for having discovered the mole so easily. Writing these paragraphs I am revealing a hidden story which my informant feels very uncomfortable about revealing and I am perhaps openly disrupting a system of silences and power strong enough to still have an effect on men who have long retired from a prison which stopped working years ago. The reactions and worries of my informants suggest that although Le Nuove is now closed and these events more than a quarter century old, Le Nuove's secret and menacing system of power still

remains, threatening and faceless, still thought capable of striking out at those who dare break its rules of silence.

The most striking aspect of Cotugno's story, as his colleagues told it to me, is the lack of empathy with which he is described and the step-by-step detective-like description of his death. Cotugno is not mourned as a man, a colleague, a friend, but he rather represents the blunt shock of terrorist violence- something which all the guards use to draw the story back to themselves: they too were on the list of people to be killed,²¹³ they left because they couldn't take it anymore,²¹⁴ they were prey to an actual 'psychosis of fear',²¹⁵ they would check each day before going out if there were suspicious people or suspicious cars out there waiting for them, and only after being sure did they go out.²¹⁶

Lorusso and Cotugno are almost erased in these narrations (and thus also in mine); the story of their death is simply used to reinforce just how great a danger the prison guards and prison workers had to face at the time. Their deaths are used as a narrative tool to explain the sense of doom and danger, which might have befallen any of the prison guards had they stayed in service. When Cotugno and Lorusso are remembered they are not described as colleagues, friends or people, but they are symbols; what is recalled are their deaths, whose narration is standardized into a fixed story which has more to do with Norman Klein's concept of the '*imago*' (borrowed from psychological discourse) than with memory.

For Norman Klein the *imago* is 'a rumour made solid' which produces, by its striking power as an image an erasure of the very memory it stands to represent. An *imago* is:

...An idealized face left over from childhood- a photograph, the colour of mother's dress on the day she took ill (...). For example, we see in our mind's eye the war in Vietnam primarily as two photographs: a general shooting a man in the head; a naked girl running toward the camera after being napalmed. These imagoes are preserved inside a cameo frame (itself a fiction: who knows what is inside?). If we concentrate, the *imago* seems to be waiting for us intact: a photo, a document, a table of statistics, an interview. It remains where we put it, but the details around it get lost, as if they were haunted, somewhat contaminated, but empty. Imagoes are the sculpture that stands in the foreground next to negative space. (...) They are

²¹³ Interview with Parente.

²¹⁴ Interview with Romano.

²¹⁵ Interview with Spatafora.

²¹⁶ Interviews with Inspector Valer, interview with Spatafora and with Cappelletto.

the rumour that seems haunted with memory, so satisfying that it keeps us from looking beyond it. The imago contains, as Kristeva describes so vividly, “once upon blotted-out-time” when “forgotten time crops up suddenly and condensed into a flash of lightning.” However, when the flash is over, much of what remains (...) is picturesque, in itself a form of erasure.²¹⁷

Rather than producing a vivid narration of the two men or even of the troubled time in which they lived and died, and which was shared by their colleagues, the recollections of Cotugno and Lorusso’s deaths stand as imagoes. Together they are imagoes of the *anni di piombo* and their stories blot out any other recollection. Although digging deeper we may find more complex reasons for their deaths as well as narratives that defy or complicate the official version of their story, the memories of Cotugno and Lorusso as breathing, living beings are almost completely eradicated by the imago of their deaths. This imago in turn also blots out other memories and interpretations of the *anni di piombo* from the narratives of their fellow prison guards. The death of the two guards becomes the dominant story, one, which somehow hides and swallows the others.

Thus Lorusso’s story gets assimilated into that of Cotugno, and both are repeated over and over as proof of just how bad things got when the terrorists were active in Turin. The *anni di piombo* are thus recalled and framed primarily through these imagoes of ‘riots, clashes and terrorism’. Hans Toch has written that most of the time violence in prison is mundane: ‘the point about prison-violence experience that matters is its unrepresentativeness...prison life is not continuously suffused with imminent violence. This fact is hard to accept because it is drab and unexciting’.²¹⁸ In the long range of prison life the *anni di piombo* provide the excitement and adventure that people have come to expect from prison, and make up for the drab reality of ordinary prison life by creating a parenthesis of myth. In that sense Buffa may be right that the stories from the time are somehow unreliable, although the dead are real.

²¹⁷ Norman Klein, *The History of Forgetting- Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*, Verso, London, 2003, p.3.

²¹⁸ Hans Toch, *Corrections a Humanistic Approach*, Harrow and Heston, New York, 1997, p.168.

On 25 November 2003 the head of prison administration Giovanni Tinebra arranged by a decree sent to the Mayor that Turin's new prison, known as 'Le Vallette', should be renamed in honour of the prison guards Lorusso and Cotugno. The official letter from the Regional authorities who were informing the Mayor read as follows:

The naming of Turin's penitentiary institution in memory of the personnel that fell in the fight against terrorism can only bring prestige to the penitentiary police corps and reaffirm the firm will of the institution in wanting to fight the barbarity that characterizes every form of subversion, especially in a city like Turin that lived with particular engagement the years of the fight against terrorism.²¹⁹

The two prison guards are here reduced to 'personnel', their names are taken as symbols and used to give prestige to the prison guards and reaffirm the city's will to fight terrorism (expressed in the very different context of the post September 11 world) while conveying a sense of closure in relation to the *anni di piombo*. As simple symbols of victimhood for the cause of the state, the agency of the dead prison guards and the misdeeds, which members of the prison community may see as having led to their death, are completely erased. In becoming official symbols Lorusso and Cotugno are further transformed and distanced from the men in flesh and blood the renaming is supposedly meant to pay tribute to.

The new Turin prison at Le Vallette is now called 'Lorusso e Cotugno'. To the people whose relatives are held in the prison 'Lorusso e Cotugno' is a place, where they go to meet their loved ones, and the more the name is used to denote the place the less it will function as a memorial to the two prison guards. If a plan aimed at improving the rehabilitative function of the prison goes through, 'Lorusso e Cotugno' will become a brand name for bread rolls and buns produced in industrial quantity in the prison and distributed to dining halls and restaurants.²²⁰ The article discussing this proposal also refers to 'Lorusso e Cotugno' as a place and fails to say anything about the men who fell for the state, whose names might grace the bread rolls. If the project were to succeed the two dead men would go from men, to icons, to bread and the highly symbolic and slightly disturbing aspect of this transition was

²¹⁹ Servizio Telematico Pubblico: Ufficio Stampa, Comunicati Stampa, 25 November 2003, http://www.comune.torino.it/ucstampa/2003/printer_1190.htm (Visited 28 October 2005)

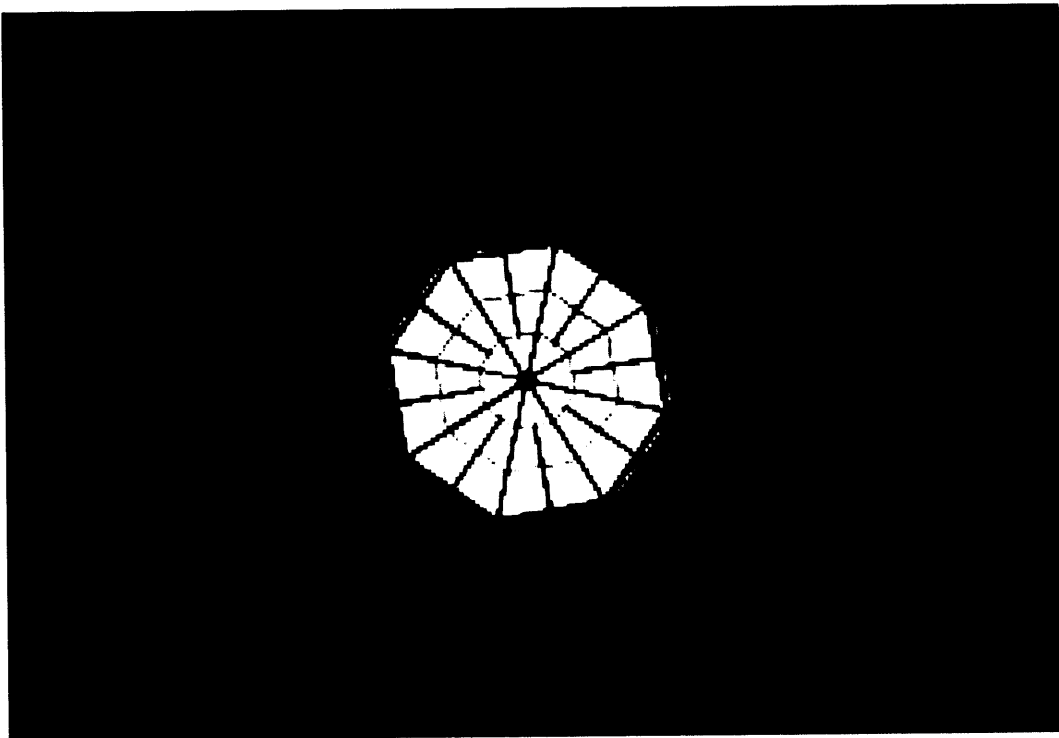
²²⁰ Ludovico Poletto, 'Vino di qualità, pane e vivai, le carceri diventano aziende', *La Stampa*, 1 May 2005.

utterly lost on the journalist. This slippage is only symptomatic of the distancing that memorial celebrations and commemorations can induce and the ways ‘honoured men’ are swiftly forgotten.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on prison guards and on the stories they use to frame their personal narratives about their work in prison. The *anni di piombo*, and in particular the assassination of two of their colleagues dominate these narratives. By analysing the competing stories and rumours surrounding the deaths of Giuseppe Lorusso (assassinated 19 January 1979) and of Lorenzo Cotugno (killed 11 April 1978) this chapter also highlights the complex interplay of power and violence in the prison as well as the secrecy and deep silences these entail. Although during interviews stories emerge which depict the prison guards as corrupt or violent, somehow responsible, via their own behaviour, for their own death, these deaths are nevertheless used as symbols of a deeply painful time in which personal danger was felt on a daily basis. The dead prison guards then function as icons of the most dramatic times in the prison and they are no longer remembered as people, friends, colleagues, but as empty figures, imagoes, much evoked but in essence forgotten.

CHAPTER FOUR



View of the main rotunda skylight from below

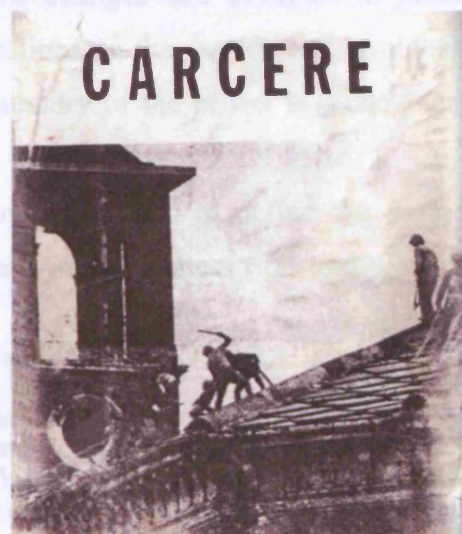
THE ROOF



Fig.12- The roof of Le Nuove with steeple, autumn 2004.

From the roof of Le Nuove the entire structure of the prison looks easier to decipher than from the inside. The arms of the prison spread out in opposite directions forming a double cross, covered by square tiles cut from Piedmontese mountain stones that sparkle in the sun like the beds of mountain streams. The chapel pokes out in the middle, with its iron cross, and its red brick steeple that used to host an iron bell, which now sits quietly in the chapel museum downstairs. The turrets and outer wall are just arms' length away and the wind that moves the trees on the streets below flies up freely to brush against anyone standing on the roof. If Orazio and I speak loudly people below might hear. Up on the roof there is no trace of the strong prison smell that still permeates the walls of Le Nuove and standing up there we have an unobstructed view of the streets around and, on a clear day, of the ring of mountains surrounding Turin. (Fig.13)

Perhaps because I know the story, I cannot help but connect the landscape up on the roof to the dramatic events that took place there during the 1970s. The steeple in particular stands out as the backdrop for an image, which was reproduced on the front pages of several newspapers and was on the cover of a



magazine sympathetic to prisoners' rights called *Carcere* -prison- produced by the Radical Party:²²¹ the image shows three policeman in full riot gear beating an unarmed prisoner who seems to be falling off the roof, one arm bent to protect his face. All four figures are dwarfed and framed by the arch of the prison steeple.

Another image, which comes to mind when looking at the roof, is the image of crowds of prisoners, their faces covered with all sorts of materials, from underwear and stockings to bed sheets with holes cut into them for their eyes, standing up on the roof with raised fists (see figure 15). The masked men looked, in the words of Gambera- one of the prison administrators who often was involved in the negotiations surrounding riots- like ghosts, hopeless and menacing. There was a moment when some thought those ghostly figures were announcing the revolution to come. This chapter will examine the gap between those early expectations and the memory of the riots today as they emerge from the narratives of ex prisoners and guards as well as in assessments made by newspapers over the years. I will limit myself to analysing three of the many riots that occurred in Le Nuove over the years: the twin riots of 1969 and 1971, and the riot of 1976.²²² I chose the first two riots because they were the riots that inflicted the greatest damage on the building and they marked the beginning of the long season of prison riots that affected the prison in the 1970s. The riot of 1976 fell at a turning point before the crackdown by police and prison authorities, when the prisoner movement had gained significant momentum and when the revolutionary project of armed bands on the outside still seemed attainable. The chapter will discuss the changes that occurred in prison following these riots and the political transformations on the outside and how these affected not only the experience but also the memory of the prison in those years.

Between 1969 and 1982 (the years sometimes used to define the period known as the *anni di piombo*- years of lead) there were countless riots and protests

²²¹ *Carcere: mensile di contro-informazione*, Collettivo Carceri Partito Radicale, n.1, January 1977.

²²² There were many other important riots in Le Nuove. The riot of 1945 when the remnants of the civil war that had raged in Northern Italy between 1943 and 1945 dragged on within prison walls and when there were not enough resources to properly feed inmates, deserves some attention which would require further research. It was impossible for me to find survivors of that riot to give me their testimony (with the exception of the priest Padre Ruggero) and the newspaper accounts from 1945 are quite minimal partially due to the fact that La Nuova Stampa was at the time just re-emerging from the war and still finding a form and style after years of Fascism. I also could have written about the hunger strikes that were held in the prison in the early 1980s, but these riots were not discussed by any of my informants and they seemed to be less enveloped in the aura of myth and danger that seems to characterize the riots I write about instead.

in Le Nuove. Most cases involved groups of prisoners refusing to return to their cells after having gone outside for their 'air time',²²³ though other forms of protests such as banging soup bowls against cell bars,²²⁴ or more elaborate peaceful protests such as hunger strikes were also used to draw attention to prison problems.²²⁵ During the longest and most dramatic protests, close to a thousand inmates went up on the roof; they would chant and scream slogans asking for the implementation of prison reform or for total revolution, and significant damage was inflicted on the building through vandalism and fire. Following the riots of 1969 and 1971, in particular, damage was so widespread that the prison had to be completely closed down for several weeks. According to Filippo Cristofanelli, a prison administrator, so many of the prisoners had to be transferred that prison authorities had to rent a large boat in Genoa for transporting them to Sardinia and to some of the smaller island prisons still in use at the time.²²⁶

Protests could address broad political questions of prisoner rights or amnesty as much as smaller complaints about the food or about an individual prisoner's maltreatment or even complaints about a failed meeting with a relative or a lawyer.²²⁷ The prison archive is filled with reports of protests, and only some of them made it to the front pages of the newspapers; when they did, journalists were rarely allowed inside the prison to talk to inmates so their accounts of the riots usually presented the 'official' version of what happened, and in often sensationalized terms. Of these protests the riots of 1969 and 1971 and the protracted protests of the summer of 1976 are the protests that have most captured the imagination and which most colour the fantastic retellings of what life was like in the prison at the time. These riots capture a trajectory in the prisoner movement, which shifted from largely spontaneous and apolitical outbursts of violent protest, to much more advanced and

²²³ See for example the many reports on the protests of 1976, from the Registro Rapporti Diversi Detenuti in the Archivio di Stato di Torino, "Casa Circondariale di Torino 'Le Nuove'" box 3452 folder 1.

²²⁴ From an interview with Filippo Cristofanelli, or Salvatore Spatafora.

²²⁵ From an interview with Mauro Salmoira. See also 'Continua nelle carceri lo sciopero della fame: aderiscono le detenute', *La Stampa*, 2 September 1975. For a later example 'Dentro le Nuove rabbia e attesa-incontro con i detenuti che da tre giorni fanno sciopero della fame' *La Stampa*, 5 September, 1986.

²²⁶ Interview with Filippo Cristofanelli. Probably in reality they were transferred on military planes see: ANSA, 'Tre vagoni volanti dell'aeronautica militare sono partiti da Roma per prelevare i detenuti delle carceri 'Nuove' di Torino e trasferirli in altri istituti di pena' *Stampa Sera* 14-15 April, 1969.

²²⁷ For an example of a protest started in solidarity to an individual prisoner see: 'Cento detenuti sui tetti delle Nuove solidarizzano col sardo che protesta' in *L'Unità*, 21 August 1976.

organized forms of protest. These shifts reflected the rise in incarcerations of political prisoners, and their rhetoric and actions briefly saw the prisoner movement incorporated into the momentous protest movements on the outside. After a brief section on literature on prison riots the chapter will focus on these three emblematic riots and will consider how they are remembered and represented today.

LITERATURE ON PRISON RIOTS

Before beginning an account of the prison riots in Le Nuove and their significance in prison memory, I should first briefly discuss existing work on prison riots and the difficulties involved in studying and writing about an event of such complexity. I should first of all comment on the use of the term 'riot', which contains a pejorative note to it and already passes judgment on the actions of prisoners who are portrayed as out of control and chaotic, rather than acting out of a clear political intent. Many prison riots were highly organized events, which, even though involving vandalism and destruction, were not the product of a mob gone mad but of people who actively tried to improve their conditions by getting attention. My informants use the Italian term 'rivolta' which could be translated as 'revolt' and has a more positive and political connotation, implying a rebellion to a possibly unbearable existing situation. 'Rivolta carceraria' is, however, the Italian equivalent of the English 'prison riot' so I will use the English term with caution, reluctantly embracing the connotations of danger and anxiety it evokes.

Prison riots are difficult to reconstruct because they are events that see several actions occurring simultaneously and because those involved are often reluctant to talk about their actions, for fear of longer sentencing. Accounts given years after the fact are inevitably fragmented and lose sharpness of detail, especially when it comes to spatial memories. It is usually hard to know which inmates were involved other than in cases in which legal action was taken against individual inmates directly accused of vandalism or violence; most often the entire inmate population is held responsible for these events and prisoners are generally transferred to other prisons scattered all over the country.

An event like a riot cannot be easily mapped, especially after the facts and in the absence of a solid group identity and sharing of experience once on the outside. In the case of the great riot/prison escape from The Maze/Long Kesh prison in

Northern Ireland in September 1983, for example, a step-by-step detailed recollection was possible only because of the cohesion of the group of IRA prisoners involved, and because of their strong awareness that they were making history.²²⁸ In Le Nuove's case the riots were seen mainly as instrumental to prison reform and its protagonists remained mostly un-named, untraceable, sent out to hundreds of separate prisons, never again able or willing to pass on the story of what they had done, how or why. Even for the riot of 1976, when more well-known political prisoners were involved, the specific riots in Le Nuove were not cherished or recalled in detail probably because they were seen by the political prisoners themselves only in terms of a much broader struggle with the Italian state, and only as one prison riot within the context of a continuous agitation going on in prisons all over Italy.

Literature on prison riots can be divided into at least four different genres:

1. Literature written as an enquiry into particularly violent riots in which inmates and guards may have lost their lives. These accounts are usually written by journalists, lawyers or outside observers either to denounce the violence or simply to try to understand how it took place.²²⁹
2. Literature written by inmate and family groups concerned about justice or rectifying misrepresentations of their ordeal or their reasons for rioting.²³⁰

²²⁸ This is evident in the interview to ex IRA prisoner Jerry Kerry in Cahal McLaughlan's documentary film *Inside Stories- Memories from the Maze and Long Kesh* (UK, 2004) as well as from Lawrence, McKeown's account in *Out of Time: Irish Republican Prisoners, Long Kesh, 1972-2000, Beyond the Pale*, Belfast, 2001. For quick information on the escape see: 'BBC On this day 25 September 1983: Dozens escape in Maze break-out', http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/september/25/newsid_2538000/2538295.stm (visited 29 November 2005)

²²⁹ In this category see: Richard Morris, *The Devil's Butcher Shop: The New Mexico Prison Uprising*, Franklin Watts, New York, 1983. See also the very famous account of the Attica prison riots by Tom Wicker, *A Time to Die: The Attica Prison Revolt*, The Bodley Head, London, 1975. For a judicial reconstruction of a riot see: Independent Committee of Inquiry Into the Protests at Peterhead Prison, *The Roof Comes Off-The Report of the Independent Committee of Inquiry into the Protests at Peterhead Prison*, Gateway Exchange, Edinburgh, 1987; or Eamon Carrabine, *Power, Discourse and Resistance: The Genealogy of the Strangeways Prison Riot*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2004. On the attempted riot at San Quentin prison and the killing of George Jackson see Paul Liberatore, *The Road to Hell: The True Story of George Jackson, Stephen Bigham and the San Quentin Massacre*, The Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 1996.

²³⁰ See for example the pamphlet *Hull '76 Prop 339*, Finchley Road, London, 1976 written by prisoners who tell the story of how the Hull riot started. See also Mike Fitzgerald, *Prisoners in Revolt*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1977 in the part dedicated to letters by prisoners smuggled outside.

3. Literature about specific renowned riots written by the protagonists who are usually political prisoners with a stake in pointing out their leadership role.²³¹
4. Literature concerned with reasons for riots in prison more generally and which perhaps looks at riots in historical context or for statistical, public policy or sociological purposes.²³²

Most of the literature on prison riots focuses on riots in Britain or the United States. Writings on Italian prison riots can be found in brief passages amongst the many memoirs of 1970s political prisoners, for example in the memoirs of Renato Curcio, Guido Viale, and Adriano Sofri.²³³ Riots also function as backdrops for action in literature, as in Nanni Balestrini's novel *Gli Invisibili*.²³⁴ Most recently riots figured prominently in a study based on oral history in Emilio Quadrelli's book *Andare ai Resti*, which is made up of a series of transcribed interviews with ex inmates.²³⁵ The only work in English dealing with Italian prison riots that I could find is John Foot's article on the revolt of San Vittore of 1946.²³⁶ None of these works consider prison riots from the perspective of cultural memory nor do they consider consecutive riots in the same place and the traces that they have left on that place and its meaning. This chapter will attempt to do so for three specific riots in Turin.

²³¹ See for example Curcio's account of the protest in L'Asinara in Renato Curcio, *A Viso Aperto*, Interview with Mario Scialoja, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milan, 1993; or Lawrence McKeown, *Out of Time: Irish Republican Prisoners Long Kesh 1972-2000*, Beyond the Pale, Belfast, 2001.

²³² In this category see: Robert Adams, *Prison Riots in Britain and the USA*, MacMillan Press, Houndmills, 1992; or Vernon Fox, *Violence Behind Bars: An Explosive Report on Prison Riots in the United States*, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1973; or Bert Useem and Peter Kimball, *States of Siege: US Prison Riots 1971-1986*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1989; or Phil Scraton, Joe Sim and Paula Skidmore, *Prisons Under Protest*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1990.

²³³ Renato Curcio, *A viso aperto*. Ibid; Guido, Viale, *A casa: una storia irritante*, Ancora del Mediterraneo, Naples, 2001, p.167-168; Adriano Sofri, *Memoria*, Sellerio, Palermo, 1990.

²³⁴ Nanni Balestrini, *Gli Invisibili*, Bompiani, Milan, 1987.

²³⁵ Emilio Quadrelli, *Andare ai resti; banditi, rapinatori, guerriglieri nell'Italia degli anni Settanta*, DeriveApprodi, Rome, 2004.

²³⁶ John Foot, 'The Tale of S. Vittore: Prisons, politics, crime and Fascism in Milan 1943-1946', *Modern Italy* vol.3, 1998, no.1, pp.25-48.

ON THE EVE OF DESTRUCTION The Riots of 1969 and 1971



Fig.14 -Prisoners with sign calling for 'prison reform'.

If you look carefully you can still find traces of the 1969 and 1971 riots in Le Nuove. If you turn backwards while climbing the narrow steps that lead to the penal section, for example, you will see a walled-up arch and the traces of an opening that was closed off. From there inmates had been able to reach a parapet that looked out on the street and the parapet had provided a base for those who climbed in from the roof to send signals to inmates in three arms of the building, directing the revolt. There are smoke stains on the stairs leading up to the old church cubicles from the riot of 1969 and the walls of one of the cubicle's corridors are still so black that it's easy to imagine what they must have been like when the flames were engulfing them.

The ex prison guard Salvatore Spatafora recalled the smell of burning mattresses when he was describing conditions in prison before the prison reform. He said: 'Before there were some mattresses made of 'crino' (horsehair), of the very heavy kind that when it burned it made a toxic smoke that would poison you.' The smell of burning mattresses is still impressed in Spatafora's memory, a striking part of his sensorial experience of his early days on the job. The smell of burning mattresses, burnt plastic, would have mingled during riots with the prison smell still tangible today when one visits the prison. Alphonse Boudard has written that 'prison is first of all a smell'.²³⁷ The prison smell still perceivable in Le Nuove is the pungent odour of bodies kept in small spaces and sweating, of bad food boiled for hours, of

²³⁷ Alphonse Boudard, *La Cerise*, Plon, Paris, 1963.

rancid urine and also the more intangible smells of fear and danger, of boredom, and of a permanent overpowering sadness.

The smell in Le Nuove before the riots would have been different, electric. The smell of sulphur matches, of paper plans consumed by being kept in tiny folds under uniformed sleeves, of cold sweat as high tension went flashing like lightning throughout the wings. The last meals and cups of coffee would fill the cells with the smell of anticipation and excitement. Then adrenalin would rush through the bodies of all the inmates like energy stored in a giant battery, and at one moment it would link all prisoners together to activate the prison like the connection made by a new and compact electrical circuit. Smoke, and bodies, and things thrown and shattered, and banged and destroyed, and people chanting and screaming and cheering, and the walls opened up and the gates unhinged, until the smoke would open a path to the sky, to the roof, to the courtyard, and freedom would seem graspable. Then the hydrants and the search lights, and the dogs and men in uniforms with sticks, and more men with machine guns in the back would bring it all back down, like a shot of dry ice on a fire. Inmates would be searched, beaten, gathered half naked in the courtyard, hands on their heads, counted over and over until bureaucrats high up in the offices would decide their fate, their punishment, and their destination.

Both the riots of 1969 and 1971 happened on an Easter Monday, a day, in Italy traditionally spent outdoors, having a light picnic out in nature with one's family. It is supposed to be a lazy day, spent recovering from heavy Easter family meals. Many prison guards had a few days off for the holiday but prisoners were still trapped inside the building. The riot of 1969 lasted four days. It involved the destruction of three wings, the kitchens, the priest's offices, the matriculation office and the workshops for industrial works with damages of several hundred million. One guard and five children were sent to the hospital for teargas intoxication and the number of wounded inmates remained unspecified although the newspapers of the 14th of April talked about 'tens of wounded inmates'.²³⁸ The riot had started with a petition for improving prison conditions and with a non-violent refusal by inmates to return to their cells. According to the *Gazzetta del Popolo*, the negotiations soon collapsed and when inmates saw several hundred guards posted on the outer walls

²³⁸ 'Le Nuove sono completamente devastate tutti i detenuti dovranno essere trasferiti', *Gazzetta del Popolo*, 14 April 1969.

pointing machine guns at them, this sparked a rebellion which devastated the prison and lasted through the night. Further guard and police reinforcements were brought in and machine guns were shot to keep inmates from trying to escape. A police incursion late on the night of the Easter Monday failed because inmates had cut off the electricity in the entire prison, and the repression operation had to wait until the next morning. After police stormed the building inmates were dragged in chains, kept for hours face down in the courtyard and then taken away by three carrier planes that transported them mostly to far off islands off the coast of Sicily and to Sardinia.

The riot of 1971 had a similar dynamic. It lasted twenty six hours and there were more than two hundred million lire in damages to several wings, the matriculation office, the warehouse, the factory workshops, and to two staff cars in the courtyard, which were blown up. Two guards were taken hostage until nighttime. Beds were set on fire, gates and walls torn open, glass shattered. Hundreds of police and carabinieri surrounded the prison shooting machine gun shots along the outer walls and teargas canisters into the prison. They eventually stormed the building and forced all the inmates into the corridors and the courtyards, counting them for hours until they again were all transferred to different prisons.²³⁹

The twice repeated violent explosion of these riots, which led three of my institutional informants to refer to these riots as the 'proteste più clamorose' - the most dramatic/loudest riots,²⁴⁰ took on the quality of a ritual, which seems to have had both cathartic and initiatory qualities. On the one hand the destruction of these two riots is framed and recounted as the result and final expression of a hidden anger produced by years of oppressive prison conditions, leading later to the prison reform of 1975.²⁴¹ On the other the riots are clearly seen as a kind of baptism by fire of the prisoner movement, a violent and traumatic act, which ushered in a decidedly different era for the prison and for the country. The riots are significant in their remembered form because they reveal the liminal space in which prison reality was transformed, destruction being at once deadly and creative.

An article from 1977 describing the riot of 1971 read as follows:

²³⁹ See Vincenzo Tessandori, 'Arrestati 23 ex detenuti per la rivolta alle nuove nella primavera del 1971', *La Stampa*, 18 December 1977.

²⁴⁰ From interviews with inspector Paolo Valer, inspector Farina and in 'testo integrale mostra alle nuove' put together on behalf of the group Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola.

²⁴¹ Prison guards in particular seem to attest to this version of the story since they often refer to how things were before the riots- see for example Spatafora or Romano's account of how prison was when they got there.

A rebellion that was sudden though provoked by ancient causes. The anger of the inmates who were forced within the bars of an old and overcrowded prison exploded in the early afternoon of a day of rest. At 15:00 hours on Monday 12 April 'Easter Monday'. At the end of the air time(...) inmates from the second wing armed with sticks and bars attack. The riot spreads rapidly to other wings, the first, the third, the sixth. Two guards are captured and kept hostage until night time. There is violence and acts of vandalism one after another. In solidarity some women shatter the glass from their cells, the nuns are forced to escape taking with them the children of the female inmates. The prison is at the mercy of the rioting prisoners; the guards are posted on the outer walls, armed, ready to block escape attempts. Shortly thereafter the old fortress in Corso Vittorio is surrounded by hundreds of policemen and *carabinieri*. To the rocks, the bottles, the roof tiles that the inmates throw out in the streets, the guards answer with tear gas, with police dogs. It's twenty-six hours of hell in the hell of prison. When the fury is placated the institution is declared uninhabitable, all the inmates are transferred.

This account, written six years after the riot, describes the riot spreading to different parts of the prison almost like a fire and it explicitly portrays Le Nuove as akin to hell. The contrast between the violent prisoners and the nuns carrying away children is highly effective in further emphasizing the fury of the rioters.²⁴² The imagery used to describe the riot of 1969 also evoked images associated with hell. An article from 1969 read: 'On Corso Vittorio a great crowd follows, alarmed, as the situation evolves: they see tongues of fire and clouds of smoke rise from the inside, they hear the screams of the rioters and the explosions of tear gas'.²⁴³ Two further sources also used the expression 'bolgia infernale'-a circle of hell- to describe what the prison was like during the riots of 1969 and 1971.²⁴⁴ This description is at once evocative of violent destruction, and of the forces of evil taking over a place, as well as of suffering, though this is not articulated by either my informants, or the newspapers. There is no information about how many inmates were wounded and their mass transfer makes it impossible to trace the injured through the prison records. All descriptions of the prison riots simply focus on the violence unfolding like a blind and terrifying force against the building.

The hell-like quality of these riots makes them stand out in comparison with later riots because of the high level of destruction achieved, which was seen by

²⁴²The same thing happened during the riot of 1969, when seven children were injured by the teargas that was thrown in to block the inmates, and three had to go to hospital. See 'Visita al carcere devastato. 7 bimbi intossicati dai gas', *La Stampa*, 17 April 1969, p.4.

²⁴³ C.G. 'Le Nuove sono completamente devastate. Tutti i detenuti dovranno essere trasferiti', *Gazzetta del Popolo*, 14 April, 1969.

²⁴⁴ Interview with Ragioner Gambera and in the memoir text by Silvano Girotto/Padre Leone, *La mia vita*, Sperling & Kupfer, Milan, 1975, p. 251.

newspapers, prison administrators, and some prisoners, as the result of a spontaneous prisoner outburst, a letting off of steam from a pressure cooker, the inevitable consequence of accumulated tensions. Prisoner S., for example, interviewed by Emilio Quadrelli in his book *Andare ai Resti*, said about the riots of 1969 and 1971:

In the beginning the struggles were mostly spontaneous (...) Acting up was easy because there was a general adherence to the clashes. People just couldn't wait they were always ready. A riot could explode at any moment. The climate was always favourable. The second riot started almost by chance, it was in the air, it had been discussed but there wasn't anything precise planned. Instead what happened was that a group of guards provoked a young man and from there all of a sudden, the whole prison blew up in the air. Le Nuove was a pressure cooker that could explode at any moment.²⁴⁵

This image of the pressure cooker, and metaphors of temperature and electricity such as those I used above are typical of the way prison guards talk about prison riots, and the atmosphere in prison in general. A prison guard I spoke to in the main prison in Oslo, Norway, told me that the temperature in his wing on the day I visited was about 38°. He said that he could feel the atmosphere in the wing every day, rising or falling mysteriously but tangibly like a collective fever.

The prison staff remembers the riots of '69 and '71 as chaotic and shocking, almost as if prisoners had been suddenly and inexplicably possessed. In both cases the riots were seen to have completely destroyed Le Nuove and caused prison guards to use terms such as 'they broke everything, they destroyed everything, burned everything so much so that the ministry had to transfer all the inmates to other prisons',²⁴⁶ or 'when I got back to Le Nuove after the riot there was nothing left, no inmates, nothing, everything had been transferred to other prisons (...) there was nothing left they destroyed everything'.²⁴⁷ This radical destruction, puzzling and shocking to prison guards, brought few results to inmates. Prisoner S. in Quadrelli recalled how the prisoner movement at the time was only focused on manifesting its hatred of the institution but did not have a clear political agenda:

On the one hand groups of politicised inmates were established which started to give the prisoner movement a more political bend, more project-based and within a longer-term perspective. On the other hand inmates started to profit from riots on their own, to use them to build relations of strength which

²⁴⁵ Quadrelli, *Andare ai resti*, ibid. p.85.

²⁴⁶ From an interview with prison guard Spatafora.

²⁴⁷ From an interview with prison guard Romano.

could be advantageous to them within the prison. But this happened a few years later, until '73-'74 in *Le Nuove* the only thing anyone was thinking about was to destroy everything and nothing else.²⁴⁸

The chaos and destruction of the first two riots stands in dramatic opposition to the very well organized riots, which saw political prisoners giving the prisoner movement a strong direction and were used by inmates to their own advantage. They were, nevertheless the embryonic manifestation of a movement, which would gain momentum and reach its peak by the mid 1970s.

The riot of 1969 in Le Nuove spread, like many later riots, to prisons all over Italy and it contributed to an atmosphere of tangible and impending change. In the Spring of 1969 Turin was still immersed in an atmosphere of what Bruno Bongiovanni has called 'a tangible sense of unrest and (...) a transformation of the attitudes towards discipline and authority',²⁴⁹ which had started to be expressed in the 1967 with the student occupation of Palazzo Campana (the building where the faculty of the humanities of the University of Turin had its courses).²⁵⁰ The workers' movement, which had started to gain momentum after a long period of disorganization and division amongst the unions, was energized by the student movement and was entering a new phase of opposition to the management authorities, which would culminate later that year in the *autunno caldo*.²⁵¹

The city was in the midst of radical social and structural transformations following more than ten years of 'boom', spearheaded by the car industry FIAT and its many satellite industries. A constant influx of new immigrants from the South, Sardinia, and some of the poorer regions of the North (Veneto, Friuli) had led to a massive expansion of the city and of its outer suburbs and to a radical shift for thousands of people from the networks and structures of agrarian society to the more alienating social realities of an advanced urban and industrial life. Strong tensions in

²⁴⁸ Quadrelli, *Andare ai resti*, ibid.

²⁴⁹ Bruno Bongiovanni, 'Il Sessantotto studentesco e operaio' in *Storia di Torino*, vol. IX Gli anni della Repubblica, ed. Nicola Tranfaglia, Einaudi, Turin, 1999, p.784.

²⁵⁰ Though perhaps one should look for its roots much earlier, in the 'fatti di piazza statuto' in July 1962 when new southern Italian workers led a massive strike against FIAT which culminated in violent confrontations in the streets that lasted two days and led to several arrests.

²⁵¹ Literally translated as 'Hot autumn', a season of deep industrial unrest and extended strikes for the renewal of contracts and against massive layoffs and restructuring at FIAT and in many other industries. According to Robert Lumley the term was first used in the *Sole 24 Ore* on 21 August 1969 probably echoing the 'long hot summer' of the race riots in America. (Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency, cultures of revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978*, Verso, London, 1990, p.208).

all sectors of society were beginning to be felt and with them an increased sense that change had to take place.

As one of the centres of Italy's industrial triangle (Milan, Genoa, Turin) the bubbling unrest in Turin's factories and university were looked upon as heralding in a new era. According to Robert Lumley 'the Turin events seemed to show that the worker's movement represented something far more radical than the unions and parties, and that, if other cities followed suit, the whole peninsula might be ready for revolutionary change'.²⁵² Bongiovanni quotes a pamphlet from a student demonstration on April 5, 1969, which stated: 'It is not enough to change things in schools; we have to change them everywhere'.²⁵³ Just one week later, on April 12th the protest in Le Nuove seemed to confirm that general sense that things could not stay the same and that something new and powerful was coming into being.

For some the 1969 riot in Le Nuove was a manifestation of a rising proletarian consciousness, which was heralding an era of deep revolutionary potential. Following that first dramatic riot in Le Nuove, an article appeared in the *Internazionale Situazionista*, a radical leftist magazine, which claimed that the 'prisoners *did* what the students never conceived of, not even when they had the strength to occupy the university'²⁵⁴ and pointed to the prisoner movement as constituting the vanguard of the revolution. The article said:

In their revolt there is the confused affirmation of a total liberty. It is (...) a revolutionary situation that is seeking its forms: the movement unleashed by the proletariat sends out its call, (...) it razes all prisons to the ground. In the moment in which inmates take power in the prison, in the moment in which they can scream it out loud and destroy the doors of their cells, hierarchy and prisons no longer exist.

The *Internazionale Situazionista* read a message in the destructive gestures of inmates, which was even more meaningful and successful than the students' occupation of the university; it was a message of total revolt and violence conceived as deeply creative in its destructive impetus. The article continues: 'it is in the precarious nature of this revolt without reserve (...) that they express despair and hope. They thus express a new *proletarian consciousness* in the awareness of not

²⁵² Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency*, ibid p.214.

²⁵³ Bruno Bongiovanni, ibid., quoting from *Ciclo capitalistico e lotte operaie*, Marsilio, Padova, 1969, p.60.

²⁵⁴ 'Lo stato d'assedio', *Internazionale Situazionista*, n.1, Milan, 1969, p.14.

being isolated; but they are also the front line of the lost men who know they are such. The scum of society and thus the vanguard of the revolution'.²⁵⁵

Reasons for the prison riots were not necessarily as clearly revolutionary and totalising as some radical leftists hoped, however. Prison conditions and the slowness of the judicial process were probably much stronger motivating factors than any acquired proletarian consciousness (though, as prisoner S. pointed out, in later riots the presence of political prisoners would give a political structure and voice to inmate concerns). By 1969 Le Nuove was in a state of dramatic over-crowding, hosting more than twice its intended number of prisoners while its infrastructure remained that of the 1870s. Inmates were still forced to interact according to the stringent disciplinarian rules of the Fascist Rocco Code of 1931, where they could receive extended sentencing as a form of punishment, and good behaviour would not lead to reduced sentencing over the years. Prisoners were not allowed newspapers of any kind. All social activities were handled by the prison chaplain and work in prison was extremely limited and handed out only to those prisoners who were closest to prison authorities, for which inmates were also paid very little. Inmates were forbidden access to cooking facilities in their own cells and this meant that they were forced to eat the prison food which was often inedible and caused fury amongst inmates.

There may also have been other tensions being played out in the riot. Prisoner S., for example, saw the riots as being partial enactments of the anger of new immigrants to Turin from the South of Italy. He said:

It was especially us southern Italians who did battle, the Turinese tried to avoid cooperating with us, they treasured their prison, they were afraid of being transferred and they were afraid of getting beaten and of extending their sentence by getting sued (...) We Southern Italians, especially the youngest ones, didn't give a shit and weren't afraid because we harboured a real hatred. We hated the prison and that shit city that had always been hostile to us. In Turin we were treated like lepers. In prison at least we had our revenge, if only because there we were in the majority.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ *Internazionale Situazionista*, ibid. p.15. This type of discourse was highly influenced by the work of Francois Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* which constituted a sort of intellectual manifesto for branches of the extra-parliamentary left and it saw a strong revolutionary potential in the perceived class consciousness of imprisoned proletarians. Lotta Continua, a leftist extra-parliamentary movement, formed a study group specifically concerned with prison topics which published daily sections concerned with prisoner issues, entitled precisely: 'i dannati della terra'-the wretched of the earth-in 1971.

²⁵⁶ Quadrelli, *Andare ai resti*, ibid. p.84-85.

Prisoner S.'s account contains a double opposition, a double sense of 'us' and 'them'. Destroying the prison was for him not only a way of getting at the prison authorities or the institutions of the state that had jailed him, but also a way of getting back at the people of Turin, including those who were sharing his plight within the prison, and to avenge himself on a city that had never welcomed him or his kind. (He makes no reference to the guards who were mostly southern Italian or Sardinian).²⁵⁷

Unlike the prison guards and prisoner S. who see the riots as forms of indiscriminate destruction ('distruggere tutto e basta'), Irene Invernizzi portrayed the rioting prisoners as using the riots to send out a specific practical political message. She discussed the riot of 11 April 1969 in terms of a spontaneous prison reform enacted by the inmates, in her book *Il carcere come scuola di rivoluzione*. She wrote:

The just violence of the inmates was not only an answer to repression, but also a practical-political attempt at prison reform in their own way. In fact they destroyed the chapel (religion is one of the keys of the so called re-educational system based on violence); the matriculation office; the office of personal files, where the inmate receives the mark of the outcast; the infirmary symbol of the internal classist discrimination, since it is known that people of higher status (or who can pay) are treated there indefinitely. They destroyed the sewers of 1857 and the antiquated water pipes, the miserable 'facilities' for hygiene, with the declared intention of having them build new ones and as an indictment of an inhumane life condition. They rendered unusable the machinery for the industrial works on which inmates tire eight hours to earn 350 lire a day.²⁵⁸

The riot of 1969 did indeed mark the beginning of a struggle to put pressure on the state to improve prison conditions and to call for prison reform. Actual prison reforms would be slow to come and slow to be applied but would in the end mark a partial victory for the prisoner movement.

The riot of 1969 was viewed by rioting inmates ten years later as a meaningful threshold, but it was played down or ignored by journalists writing for *La Stampa*, who instead saw the riot of 1971 as a threshold moment for the prisoner movement. On the 14th of April 1979 prisoners celebrated the 'historic' riot from ten years before. The prisoners delivered an official statement to newspapers in which they said: 'the riot of the imprisoned proletarians marked the beginning of a

²⁵⁷ Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency*, ibid. wrote about the labour migrations from the south and wrote that 'one of the consequences of this labour migration was to transfer the tradition of resistance of the southern proletariat to those cities, and by a cruel irony: to bring the migrant worker and the migrant policemen face to face in conflict,' p. 209. None of my informants commented on this, however, and prison guards were usually minimized their Southern Italian origin and never commented on that of the inmates.

²⁵⁸ Irene Invernizzi, *Il carcere come scuola di rivoluzione*, Einaudi, Turin, 1973, p.214.

campaign of struggle, which involved the entire circuit of the ‘state lager’.²⁵⁹ In commemoration, they refused to return to their cells and protested peacefully for two hours. This commemoration highlights the presence of an alternative history, kept alive by word of mouth, and crafted by prisoners themselves through their own unofficial memories. This commemoration and self-celebration on the part of prisoners clearly marks those riots as historic and significant for those who experienced the prison from within. An article from 1991 in *La Stampa*, however, saw the riot of 1971, not that of 1969, as the turning point within the prison. On the twentieth anniversary of the riot of 1971 *La Stampa* published an article describing its version of what had happened on that Easter Monday. The paper saw that riot as marking the beginning of ‘un decennio di follia’-a decade of folly. The article reads:

From that day on escapes (successful and not), stabbings in cells and in the courtyard, the discovery of bombs and guns hidden by the prisoners were ordinary events: murder would twice pass through the main gate of Le Nuove truncating the lives of Salvatore Cinieri, an extremist from Azione Rivoluzionaria, and of Pasquale Viele, a robber who was strangled by the terrorists because they suspected him, wrongly, of being an infiltrated carabinieri spy. Death would also stop under the outer wall in December '78 when the Red Brigades killed two policemen, Salvatore Lanza and Salvatore Porceddu.²⁶⁰

This article uses sensationalist elements of murders, escapes, stabbings and bombs to create an image of that time as highly dramatic.

La Stampa does not consider the riot of 1969 as the starting point for that ‘ten years of folly’ for the prison, perhaps because 1971 as a starting date makes it easier to package the prison riots away with the other events of the *anni di piombo* since by that time high-profile political prisoners started to arrive in the prison. The 1971 riot in fact was partially organized by the controversial figure of Adriano Sofri, whose long judicial misadventures stretched all the way to 1991 and beyond. This tendency to misplace or strategically rearrange chronologies so as to make them more clearly fit within a coherent narrative, is highlighted by the oral historian Alessandro Portelli. Portelli presents an example from the workers movement in the industrial city of Terni, where several of his informants misplaced the date of the killing of one

²⁵⁹ Article ‘I detenuti alle Nuove commemorano la “storica” rivolta di dieci anni fa’, *La Stampa*, 14 April, 1979.

²⁶⁰ A.B., ‘Quel Giorno di Pasquetta sono scoppiate le Nuove’, *La Stampa*, 14 April 1991, p.39.

of their fellow workers from 1949 to 1953 and shifted its context to use it as a unifying symbol. He writes that:

This obviously does not cast doubt on the actual chronology; but it does force us to rearrange our interpretation of events in order to recognize the collective processes of symbolization and myth-making in the Terni working class-which sees those years as one uninterrupted struggle expressed by a unifying symbol (the dead comrade), rather than as a succession of separate events.²⁶¹

Portelli suggests that these chronological inconsistencies should alert us to the processes of symbolization and myth-making at play in these narratives; *La Stampa*'s disregard for the 1969 riot thus contributes to the myth-making that saw 'terrorists' at the basis of the troubles in the prison from the very beginning.

While *La Stampa* chose to play down the meaning of the riot of 1969, prisoners from 1979 wanted to produce a genealogy of inmate rebellion by which spontaneous proletarian outbursts were seen as being at the origins and at the heart of the prisoner movement. The politicised prisoners from 1979 saw the ordinary criminal participation in the riots of 1969 as a powerful upsurge of revolutionary potential from the underclass, targeting the system which was seen and described as totalitarian (thus 'state lager').

Prison guard and inmate accounts see very little difference between the riot of 1969 and that of 1971. Prisoner S. talks about 'both the great riots' as if they were two of a kind and describes them in similar terms:

I participated in both the great riots in Le Nuove. The first time we surprised them, they didn't expect it, we took control of the prison and we destroyed it. After that time they had rebuilt it with a whole series of security systems. They considered it a 'riot proof' prison. We immediately proved them wrong. The second time we went down on it even more heavily than the first. (...) This was all possible because inside Le Nuove there was an impressive spontaneous but not improvised prisoner organization. We were really panthers in a cage.

Prisoner S. and my informants do not mention the presence of political prisoners in the riot of 1971. *La Stampa*, however, insists on linking the 1971 riot with the Red Brigades and political prisoners.

An article from 1977, reporting on some of the convictions against prisoners involved in the 1971 riot suggests that the Red Brigades orchestrated the riot. The

²⁶¹ Alessandro Portelli, 'The Peculiarities of Oral History', *History Workshop* (1981), no.12, pp.96-107, p.100.

article commented on a report by the *carabinieri*, which said that the riot had been: 'led by the Red Brigadist Zichitella Martino, deceased in Rome following armed conflict in December 1976 (...) who 'together with many others who were not identified (...) committed acts of extremely serious devastation leading to the almost total destruction of the infrastructures and supplies in the 1,2,3,6 wings of the prison (...)'.²⁶² The fact that blame for the riot was lodged against a dead brigadist, who was not mentioned by any other sources either in the newspapers or amongst my informants, seems highly suspicious and may have also stemmed from a desire to provide a direct link between terrorists and the early prison riots. This also says something about the way prison violence was perceived in 1977, a time in which terrorist organizations had become extremely powerful. Such an interpretation also neutralized some of the early riot's threatening power by downplaying the spontaneous and messy anger of the inmates portrayed instead as simply following the orders of the Red Brigades.

By their destruction of the prison building and by the potential danger and power they exuded, the riots of '69 and '71 both gave impetus to the prisoner movement. Following those riots a much longer season of riots across Italy would forever transform the structure and running of prisons by contributing to the prison reform of 1975 and then later to that of 1986. Felice Tagliente, a prison psychiatrist and head of the organization *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola*, gives credit to the political prisoners for the reforms that took place in the prison. He said:

So then precisely because of these explosive situations in the prison they had the Gozzini reform in 1986 and I believe the credit should be given, the credit for these big changes, is to be attributed to political prisoners, precisely because they pushed forth these issues not only on the level of the prison but especially on the institutional and political level, making their voice heard on the outside.

Tagliente notes that prisons don't have the same levels of violence as in the past because inmates now 'have a vested interest in maintaining a certain form of behaviour to take advantage of the parole (liberazione anticipata) and because now every six months one has a sentence reduced by 45 days, which within four years is like having a year less to pay.' Ironically, the very reforms that political prisoners

²⁶² Vincenzo Tessandori, 'Arrestati 23 ex detenuti per la rivolta alle "Nuove" nella primavera del 1971', *La Stampa*, 18 December 1977.

successfully bargained for were those, which ended up disempowering them and their movement within the prison, destroying their group cohesion and solidarity.

THE FORGOTTEN RIOT OF THE SUMMER OF 1976

*Botte su botte poi l'isolamento
spesso finisce così
quei brutti boia, figli di troia
non fanno che pestare
Non ci si può neanche lamentare
non si può neanche parlare
basta un lamento per il carcerato
per essere massacrato*

*Delle vostre galere un giorno
un buon uso sapremo far,
prima apriremo le porte agli schiavi
li accoglieremo nell'umanità
e dopo in fila uno per uno
vi metteremo tutti là
il tribunale del proletariato
i vostri delitti dovrà giudicar*

*Siamo saliti tutti sul tetto
gridando "porci nazisti
vogliamo avere i nostri diritti
o la dovrete pagare"
Ci ha risposto il direttore
con mille poliziotti
ed ai giornali è andato a dire
ch'era disposto a trattare*

*E se per caso voi sentirete
ch'è morto un carcerato
certo è possibile che quel disgraziato
sia stato massacrato
ma se vi parlano di rivolte
di lotte nelle prigioni,
è perchè cresce la lotta di classe
contro tutti i padroni...*

-Alfredo Bandelli, 1974.

Blows upon blows then solitary confinement
it often ends that way
those damned executioners, sons of bitches
do nothing but beat people
one can't even complain
one can't even talk
it's enough for an inmate to complain
for him to be massacred

Some day we will know how to put
your jails to good use
first we will open the doors to the slaves
we will greet them into humanity
and then we will put you in a line one by one
the proletarian tribunal
will have to judge your crimes

We all went up on the roof
yelling "bloody nazis,
we want to have our rights
or you will have to pay"
the director answered us
with a thousand cops
and then he went to tell the papers
that he was willing to negotiate

And if by any chance you will hear
that an inmate has died
then it's possible that that unfortunate one
has been massacred
but if they speak to you of riots
of struggles in the prisons
it's because the class war is growing
against all masters...

The above song written by Alfredo Bandelli was part of a record called 'Fabbrica, Galera, Piazza' - factory, jail, square-issued in 1974 and it captures some of the sentiments felt by sections of the Italian left towards the riots that had been shaking the prisons since 1969. The very title of the record suggests a transition between these three spaces and a sense that all three were part of the same oppressive

system.²⁶³ This transition between the spaces of the factory, of prison and of the city square, imagined a rise in proletarian consciousness, which would emerge in the factories, transform via the harsh experience of prison and would then materialize into a revolutionary force in the square. The inclusion of prison in this triptych shows the extent to which prison had gained a place in the public imaginary by the mid 1970s as well as the special role it was seen to have, for some, in the path towards revolution.



Fig.15- Inmates on the roof of Le Nuove, summer 1976

Between the explosive riots of 1969 and 1971 and the extended riot of the summer of 1976 momentous transformations had affected both the prison system and Italy at large. After years of neglect, prisons had come back into the public eye thanks to repeated journalistic enquiries into prison conditions,²⁶⁴ to the work of leftist pressure groups,²⁶⁵ of legislators and reformers, and to the increasingly

²⁶³ Dario Melossi and Massimo Pavarini have written an influential book discussing the parallel developments of the prison and the factory in modern times: *The Prison and the Factory; Origins of the Penitentiary System*, Glynis Cousin (trans.), MacMillan Press, London, 1981, which sees the capitalist mode of production 'simultaneously creating crime and punishment: vagabonds, brigands, deserters; labour in houses of correction, forced public works and execution squads' p.85. In another article entitled 'La città e il suo rovescio: note in tema di carcere e metropoli', *La Nuova Città*, Carcere e Città. Quaderni della Fondazione Michelucci, Florence, 1983, Massimo Pavarini went even further and suggested that 'If then it is urban society that becomes factory like-then in the same logic-we can also affirm that it is the entire urban society that becomes prison like' p.21.

²⁶⁴ See for example the 'Reportage dalle Carceri Italiane' from *La Domenica del Corriere*, n.6-10 and 7-17 February 1974, which denounced the inhumanity of prison conditions and the failures of the law in glossy multiple-page formats, including pictures of the contention beds and complaints by prison guards. Such reports recurred regularly in the early seventies on weekly magazines and daily newspapers.

²⁶⁵ The most active in Turin being the Radical Party 'Lega non-violenta per i detenuti' spearheaded by Giuliana Cabrini, Controsbarre (an association of family members and ex prisoners) and it is also worth noting the work of the organization Soccorso Rosso on a national level. Soccorso Rosso was

organized internal committees sprouting out in prisons all over Italy. In 1975 the first reform of the prison code since 1931 was finally passed into law. It insisted on the redemptive function prisons were to have and it called for 'alternative measures' to be introduced in replacement of normal prison sentences, such as a system of parole for minor crimes and regimes of 'semi-libertà'-literally half freedom- where inmates could work outside during the day and return to the prison at night. The reform allowed prisoners greater access to the outside world, longer and more frequent visits with family, access to work and activities aimed at helping their re-introduction into society. The prison was to be opened up to social workers and psychologists who would take over many of the functions previously served by the prison chaplain. There were attempts at reducing the extremely long periods of incarceration previous to trial and reductions in sentencing for good behaviour were also introduced. Finally the reform aimed at abolishing the most violent and repressive rules and practices in the prison, especially corporal punishment.

The reform of 1975 was passed into law at a time in which prisons were overcrowded and understaffed and guards complained that they had neither the training nor the means to implement the new reform.²⁶⁶ Following a rise in violence from the right and the left (and largely in response to the *autunno caldo* and increased worker and student mobilization) emergency laws were set in place in 1974 and 1975. The most infamous of these emergency laws was the Legge Reale which gave police extraordinary powers (especially concerning their use of firearms and their rights to detain suspects for 48 hours without pressing charges), while a decree from 1974, decreto legge n.99 11/4/1974 allowed for preventive incarceration to be extended to up to eight years based simply on suspicion of planning terrorist activity. These laws brought rivers of politically aware and often educated people to prison, simply on suspicion of collaborating with terrorists.

initially born to give assistance to communist strikers and other political prisoners at the turn of the last century. In 1970 an organization bearing the same name emerged out of the 'Collettivo Giuridico Politico'-a group of lawyers and judges who wanted to give support (especially legal) to the student movement of 1968. Soccorso Rosso brought assistance mostly to leftist political prisoners and became involved in the struggles over the utility bills and for greater transparency. It also produced several important publications including a manual to let political prisoners know their rights and an edited volume of the statements of The Red Brigades. The most famous supporter of Soccorso Rosso was probably the actress Franca Rame, who was consequently gang raped by a police squad in Milan in retaliation for her political activity.

²⁶⁶ See for example Luigi Vismara, 'Inchiesta sul sistema penitenziario italiano. Prigionieri: manca tutto, anche il senso di colpa', *Il Giorno*, 2 July 1976. See also interviews with Romano, Parente, Spatafora and Farina.

These people in turn gave a political voice to the deep malcontent already felt in prison and exacerbated by the failure to apply the prison reform laws. Following these politicised riots and out of the fear of a contamination between political prisoners and ordinary criminals, the early 1980s would see the creation of laws aimed at making punishment in prison much harsher, at separating political and ordinary criminals, and at encouraging political prisoners to give up the armed struggle and denounce their comrades.

The 1976 prison riot in Le Nuove came at a time of transition between the successes of the prisoner movement and the repressive measures that were to follow. It started at *Ferragosto*, one of the hottest days of the year, when an inmate who had injured himself was kicked in the face by a prison guard. The atmosphere in the overcrowded prison was quite tense and an overall cell search had further increased the 'temperature' in the prison.²⁶⁷ The riot had two phases: a political phase aimed at reaching politicians and arguing for practical amendments and applications of the prison reform, and a second phase in early September after negotiations collapsed and the prisoners took control of the prison and went up on the roof wearing headscarves.

In the first phase, a prisoner delegation was sent to discuss prisoner problems with city and regional authorities who then reported back to the minister of justice in Rome²⁶⁸ and similar protests were repeated all over Italy following Turin's lead.²⁶⁹ The second phase of the riot lasted for several days and saw dramatic battles up on the roof by day and by night in which unarmed inmates were beaten by the police in plain view of outside spectators. 600 policemen stormed the building and violently brought order back to the prison.²⁷⁰ Ten policemen were wounded, three inmates and an administrator who 'fell off the roof' were badly wounded as were three protesters

²⁶⁷ 'La protesta dei detenuti alle Nuove', *La Stampa*, 17 August 1976.

²⁶⁸ See *La Stampa*, 'Delegazione dal ministro per il problema "Nuove". Questa mattina a Roma con il sindaco Novelli, il presidente Viglione, il sen. Galante Garrone, Spadaccia e Dell'Andro,' August 27, 1976. See also *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, 'Ritorna oggi in carcere la delegazione delle autorità. Si concludono le trattative alle Nuove. Verso l'accordo o una nuova protesta?,' August 31, 1976. Or *La Stampa* 'La protesta di Ferragosto: come si è giunti alla tregua. Ecco battuta per battuta il colloquio tra detenuti e autorità alle Nuove,' August 18, 1976.

²⁶⁹ See, for example, Giovanni Trovati, 'Proteste e incidenti a Torino, Nuoro, Poggioreale. Sommosse nelle carceri per le condizioni incivili,' *La Stampa*, August 16, 1976.

²⁷⁰ See 'Violenta rivolta alle Nuove. Drammatica notte quando sembrava che si fosse raggiunto un accordo', *La Stampa*, 1 September 1976. See 'Agenti e Carabinieri irrompono alle Nuove. Il Direttore: "Basta, sono stanco, vado via". La protesta nel carcere è finita soltanto con l'intervento delle forze dell'ordine' d.m. September 1976.

down in the street and two photographers.²⁷¹ There is no information on exactly how many prisoners were wounded although there were rumors that there were several hundred wounded, that the guards had punished the leaders of the riots and that punitive transfers would be used against the protesters (as in fact occurred).²⁷² Although it was a highly 'photogenic' riot, producing dramatic visions of male and female inmates crying out slogans from the roof and of night battles with the police dressed in full riot gear using tear gas and dogs, the riot of 1976 has left few precise traces in the narratives of my informants. This, I will argue, has to do with the repression that followed, with the end of the utopian fantasies of revolution and with the disappointment that came from the dissolution of the armed bands.



Fig.16- Women protest on the roof, summer 1976

We had planned a strike with extended 'air' time²⁷³ in other words a refusal to - return to our cells with the usual consequences you face when not going back after 'air'-the 'squadretta' of the guards appears with sticks and then you might risk getting beaten, they start saying: 'Are you or aren't you getting back in?' At a certain point the majority of the female inmates didn't go back inside and the whole thing grew until it became a sort of actual riot in which we 'occupied' the section closest to the gardens which was only separated by a little wall, which was reachable by following this wall from the gardens in the prison courtyard. There was an unfinished building with a covered attic so some of the inmates suggested we spend the night there, the classic night on the roof of the prison so we went there and this became a huge deal. Because the prison was in unrest from the outside some inmate's relatives had gathered and were talking to them, cheering them on

²⁷¹ 'Snidati dai tetti i detenuti in rivolta. E' bloccata un'evasione di massa', *Gazzetta del Popolo*, 4 September 1979.

²⁷² 'I parenti accusano: hanno punito i capi della rivolta. Il giro di vite (...) sarebbe all'origine dei numerosi casi di autolesionismo e dei tentativi di suicidio degli ultimi tempi. Trasferimenti e percosse', *Stampa Sera*, 22 September 1976. See also: 'Ancora tumulti alle Nuove: detenuti consegnati in cella, donne sui tetti. (...) smentite voci di 200 trasferimenti e di reclusi picchiati', *Cronaca Informazioni*, 6 September 1976.

²⁷³ 'fermata all'aria'- 'aria', 'air', is the term used for prisoners' time outdoors.

and they had also made a banner. I would say that the majority, in fact most of the female inmates participated. Those who didn't participate directly showed us their solidarity since they sent down water, food, and things like that, from the windows of their cells. Blankets, they sent down blankets because at night it was cold even though it was summer, it was august. (...) After that what happened? As always (...) the presumed instigators agitators and organizers of the whole thing were seen to be the political prisoners and so they were transferred, in fact from Le Nuove I was transferred to Alessandria and then I had a nice tour of all the prisons in Piedmont and beyond.²⁷⁴

This passage is drawn from an interview with Adriana Garizio, who served nine years in prison for her participation in the Red Brigades. It begins, like many of the recollections of political prisoners I interviewed or found transcribed in books, with the collective subject 'we'. This 'we' form is not coincidental but it reflects the collective nature of political action in prison as well as a strong sense of belonging to a group, in this case the Red Brigades extended to the group of 'political prisoners' with whom Adriana Garizio helped plan the women's protest of the summer of 1976. At the end of the passage, however, the subject goes back to 'I' when it comes to the experience of being transferred to several prisons around Piedmont and then Italy. This shift from the collective moment of the prison riot to that of individual punishment lies at the heart of the season of prisoner struggles which continued until the judicial phenomenon of the *carceri speciali*-special prisons,²⁷⁵ *pentitismo*-repentance²⁷⁶- and *dissociazione*-dissociation,²⁷⁷ symbolically and practically disbanded any collective notion of the experience of armed bands from the 1970s.

For many political prisoners there was a sense, in the mid to late 1970s that the judicial repercussions for violent behaviour in prison and for participating in riots would not have consequences on them as individuals because their group was winning, and soon the entire system would collapse. This delusion, which must be

²⁷⁴ From my interview with Adriana Garizio

²⁷⁵ These prisons were approved by decree in 1977, out of a sense of deep threat posed to the country by violent criminal organizations. They were meant to (and continue to) hold the criminals considered most dangerous and they were exempt from the effects of the 1975 prison reform. These prisons were infamous for the brutality with which inmates were treated by prison guards and for being located in often far off places difficult to visit. Inmates were often held there under conditions very close to solitary confinement.

²⁷⁶ A judicial condition by which inmates could receive reduced sentencing if they completely renounced their belief in the armed struggle and provided useful information for authorities to prevent further acts of violence. After its first application in 1980 for one of the large trials of the Red Brigades it was later applied largely also in mafia trials.

²⁷⁷ Another judicial labelling by which inmates could receive reduced sentencing or improved prison conditions for officially distancing themselves from the beliefs that pushed them to join armed bands and renouncing violence.

seen in the context of its historic moment, is clearly reflected in a highly rhetorical statement that Alberto Franceschini, one of the founding members of the Red Brigades, presented to his judges in 1975: 'I am not interested in countering your libels, it means accepting your heinous logic. Anyway it is not to you 'distinguished excellencies' that I must explain why I am a *communist combatant* (...). The crisis hastens more and more the timing of the end of your class dominion and by now ripens the inevitable communist revolution. Then, and that will be very soon, I too will present myself to you'.²⁷⁸

Adriana Garizio, speaking to me from her apartment in the hills of Turin, on a grey day in 2004, no longer expected an imminent revolution. She spoke quietly and sadly about her experience of the carceri speciali-high security prisons- and about the separation from her three teenage daughters who were left to fend for themselves during the years she was in prison. The private played a much greater part in her recollections than any group identity, except for her memories of the riots and her description of other moments of solidarity among prisoners (especially structured around food) when the 'we' form came back.

In her account of the riots of 1976 that I transcribed above Adriana Garizio uses certain expressions, which suggest that the experience of that specific riot was routine and somehow predictable, part of a common prison procedure in those years, a performance she had grown accustomed to. She talks about 'usual consequences', about 'the classic night on the roof', and about the consequences of the riots 'as always' falling on the shoulders of political prisoners. During her interview it was difficult for her to remember which events occurred in which prison and she struggled to think of events specific to Le Nuove, given that she was continuously shuffled around from prison to prison, a fate very common for political prisoners at the time. Adriana does remember, however, the specific geography of Le Nuove's courtyard with the little wall leading up to the roof, she remembers that the nights were cold even though it was August, as well as the solidarity of those female inmates who did not participate in the riot but nevertheless sent food and blankets to the rioting women on the roof. The nights she spent on the roof were moments of

²⁷⁸ From a letter from Alberto Franceschini to his judges presented for the record 15 may, 1975 in Soccorso Rosso, *Brigate Rosse-che cosa hanno fatto, che cosa hanno detto, che cosa se ne è detto*, Feltrinelli, Milan, 1976.

stolen agency, of excited solidarity, in the context of a life otherwise taken over almost completely by the prison authorities.

Although according to the newspapers at the time Adriana played a key role in some of the negotiations that took place between the prisoners and the prison and regional authorities, her memories of the reasons for the protest are a bit vague: 'When I arrived in Le Nuove there was a claim on the part of the inmates on the basis of a platform with particular requests, well I don't know if I remember them, one for example was to have a greater number of jobs, another had to do with the improvement of the food, another I don't remember...' These were part of a general protest movement for improving prison conditions, and protests of this kind were repeated over and over throughout the seventies so that it is probably difficult for Adriana to remember any specific requests tied to a specific prison revolt.

Protests had gone on in ebbs and flows, following a tide of anger and frustration for the failures to apply the prison reform and improve prison conditions. The protest of the summer of 1976 extended into the fall. More than a thousand prisoners went up on the roof, wearing hoods made from sheets, shirts and underwear. They stood in the summer rain and under the scorching sun while crowds of people gathered outside to watch them, to support them, and to photograph their threatening postures for the front page of the local news. These are some of the titles, which appeared in bold black print on the front pages of the newspaper, with dramatic pictures accompanying them: 'In Turin the prison in inmate hands. Le Nuove: thirty hours of riot'²⁷⁹- 'Le Nuove still in the hands of rioting inmates-tension rises in the prison, with hundreds of inmates huddling up on the roof, by night time six hundred guards had entered the courtyard ready for clashes: faced with the threat the rioters pretended to cut a deal-when the policemen left they went back on the roof-bad mood amongst the guards-the police charges 'groups' and relatives that are showing solidarity to the prisoners'.²⁸⁰

Going up on the roof served many functions: the most important being that of making inmates visible to the outside world, making their anger and protest break out of the prison and flow into the street. The design of the prison was aimed at containment and order and at making inmates invisible; the inmates' disorderly conquest of the roof was a publicly oozing wound in the building, revealing

²⁷⁹ Ghidoni, Di Marco, Magnoni, *La Stampa*, front page image, d.m.

²⁸⁰ From *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, 2 September 1976, p.4.

problems and frustrations. Going up on the roof meant conquering open space after months of enclosure and it is no accident that so many riots occurred during the hottest months of the year. The roof was also a safer place for inmates because precisely this newly conquered visibility meant forcing the (usually hidden) violence of the prison to be exposed and revealed out in the open. If violence was to happen, it would be for all to see, and this in itself would, they hoped, help increase sympathy towards prisoners. While going up on the roof produced a public spectacle for citizens on the outside unaccustomed to seeing inmates, it was also a way for inmates to subtract themselves from the regimented gaze of the prison guards and of making themselves invisible to the disciplinary machine. Head coverings would further that disappearance. Reaching the roof was at once a way for prisoners to show off their strength to the outside world while hiding out away from the guards. They were thus at once revealing and veiling themselves.

Adriana remembers the support of relatives and protesters on the street. *La Stampa* of the 26 of August 1976 reports: ‘Outside the prison, along the boulevard, groups of young people from the Anarchic Collective and from Autonomia Operaia support, yelling slogans and raising closed fists, the battle of the recluse inmates. “All prisons will be destroyed, the only justice is proletarian justice” is the cry that echoes under the reddish walls when it is already getting dark’.²⁸¹ By the time Adriana left prison in 1986 the streets around the prison were deserted and the slogan of ‘proletarian justice’ had been relegated to the memory of the execution of Aldo Moro and to the recovery of his body in the trunk of a car.

In the recollections of the prison authorities surrounding the riots in which prisoners went up on the roof there is a mix of awe towards the ‘star’ political prisoners whom they saw as running the show, combined with a sense of pity for the inmates. This pity is either expressed in a concern over their living conditions for which they were protesting, or for an imagined subordination they saw ordinary prisoners being forced into by the political prisoners. A typical example of this second case emerged in the double interview to the prison guard Carmelo Parente and his wife, which I will transcribe below:

²⁸¹ See ‘Da due giorni sul tetto delle Nuove’, *La Stampa*, d.m., 1976.

Carmelo: my wife worked for four years as a guard, (...) she did it three months a year and so she had practical knowledge of the female section and of the situation and since they were hiring replacement guards my wife did that. We were there; she would go downstairs and was in service, a stone throw away. What kind of worker has a job like that! She goes down and she's there, for six years.

Carmelo's wife: There was Curcio's woman, la Mantovani, Nadia Mantovani, a rascal (pestifera) she was!

Carmelo: Then when they started the red brigades when they started to make guards lame, (azzoppare-by shooting them in the knees) the doctor Romano, then we started to give up, I got them to let her off, and she resigned.

Wife: Yes, because they waged war to the sky. It was Mantovani that forced all the other women, they would get down in the section, they went out...they protested they didn't want to eat anything. And more than once I took her to meet Curcio, Mantovani, and they talked in their own way and it wasn't that they let you understand much...anyway they were the most hardened and aggressive and they ruined everything for the other women because they would get scared they threatened them if they didn't strike. Silence. There were female inmates, poor souls, that didn't understand anything about politics (...) and they were afraid of them. And the poor nuns, sometimes they threatened them.

Carmelo's wife is most concerned about the presence of Nadia Mantovani, a member of the Red Brigades and lover of Renato Curcio. She portrays Nadia Mantovani as the single authority in the female section of the prison (though she then uses the plural form 'they were the most hardened and aggressive' which may point to other Red Brigade women) and immediately places herself in relation to the most threatening and charismatic brigadist: Renato Curcio, a leader and one of the founders of the Red Brigades, whom she saw because she was accompanying Nadia Mantovani.²⁸²

Carmelo's wife sees the women's strike mostly in terms of an irresponsible violence, which the political prisoners used against ordinary prisoners who didn't understand anything about politics. She portrays the women as protesting without saying anything about why they were protesting and her expression 'they waged war to the sky' suggests a useless activity in which the women seem to be all worked up about something impossible. Her picture of the protesting women and of those who didn't want to participate as being threatened into political action is very different from the picture of solidarity among female inmates presented by Adriana Garizio.

²⁸² As I discussed in Chapter Two, The relationship between Renato Curcio and Nadia Mantovani was referred to me by several of my informants, and it is one of the events people have liked to fantasize about, that had a great appeal and around which many rumors were formed.

The prison administrator Gambera also alternates between evoking dramatic moments and personalities and expressing pity for ordinary prisoners. He says:

Le Nuove was a battlefield. Inmates who went up on the roof. In Sister Giuseppina's time it was nice in prison, there was the nursery then the political prisoners arrived. Prima Linea were the first to bring trouble at home. If they said not to come to classes, they didn't go back. Sofri said not to accept food and then there were people without food and with no means who were afraid and had to refuse the prison food. If Graglia ordered 'this morning nobody goes to school, nobody went. Until politics came into play in Turin the prison was liveable: there were courses, gardening, the circus, the soccer field...after the 'contestation'²⁸³ came to Italy they organized life in prison through the cleaners they passed each other messages.

Gambera's expression 'bringing trouble at home' is rather unusual when referring to an institution like the prison. It is used in connection with Sister Giuseppina and all the activities inside the prison which were much more 'family run'. Gambera's expression almost makes the political prisoners sound like rebellious teen-agers, bringing trouble into the home for no reason. Gambera's list of activities that were organized in prison before corresponds to the activities listed in one of Padre Ruggero's publications and to the images reproduced in the prison museum inside the chapel. They are stereotyped activities which portray a sense of artificial peace, in which the priest and prison authorities were in control and prisoners had no voice...everything was top down.

In memory only particular images recur, for guards the images are of a repeated destruction, of the presence of prison 'celebrities', of the beginning of hardship and the troubling image of prisoners going up on the roofs. Prisoners recall the solidarity and excitement they experienced during the riots. They also mostly recall the punishment they always had to endure afterwards. With time the reasons for protesting have become more generic, less vital and specific riots have started to blend into each other in light of the events that came after. I asked several family friends who were alive (and conscious) during the mid 1970s about the riots and they only had a very vague recollection of the area around Le Nuove having been blocked off to traffic after the demonstrations and of having seen images of prisoners up on the roof on the news and in the papers. They do not remember why

²⁸³ Literally meaning the tendency to dispute things, he probably means the rise of protest movements, student movements, workers movements, feminist movements...

prisoners were protesting however. The rioting prisoners have become imagoes, blocking out the political messages and struggles they symbolized at the time.

The season of riots that challenged the peace and order of the prison system would end abruptly following a series of legal measures and judicial procedures which would split the prisoner movement and dissolve the armed bands that had been active all over Italy starting in the early 1970s. Besides the initial emergency laws I mentioned above (the decree of 1974 and the Legge Reale) on 31 January, 1978 the minister of the interior Francesco Cossiga issued a decree establishing the Ucigos (Ufficio centrale per le investigazioni generali e le operazioni speciali-central office for general investigations and special operations) which was designed to gather information and help prevent terrorism, sometimes by intimidatory means such as blackmail or violent interrogations. General Dalla Chiesa, head of the carabinieri force, was put in charge of the fight against red terrorism and given special powers. Besides overseeing the special prisons and coordinating police forces across the country in the fight against terrorist cells, Dalla Chiesa would play a central role in establishing the practice of 'pentimento'-repentance, by which terrorists could receive reduced sentencing in exchange for crucial information about their fellow activists.

In the prisons, in spite of the 1975 prison reform law, repressive practices were used regularly. The most common consisted of continuous transfers of political prisoners from one far off prison to another, making maintaining their contacts with their families much harder. Those who were held in the special prisons were often subjected to the indiscriminate use of the 'article 90' which withdrew their right to cook for themselves, to have access to books or newspapers, significantly reduced their air time to a single half hour a day and kept them isolated from other prisoners. Tonino Paroli, a member of the 'historic' Red Brigades gave this testimony during his trial in 1984:

After ten years they still deprive me of meetings, interfere with my relations, censor my mail, without thinking of all the years that have passed, when the mail came and maybe, out of three sheets, one was missing. It was done really scientifically to cause pain, from the Asinara onwards (...) they put us in cells that were no bigger than security rooms, in four, with the bugliolo and the toilet, there, for months and months (...) I spent two years in normal prisons, from '75 to '77, then in July '77 Dalla Chiesa opened the circuit of the 'camosci'-mountain goats; I was picked up in Modena, 20 km from my home, in the middle of the night and with the helicopter I was taken to the Asinara and nobody gets out from there. From then on the total torture began; we were allowed sixty meetings with relatives a year and, at 2000

kilometres, we have five or six a year; isolation; they have been undressing me two or three times a day for the past ten years, I am undressed twice a day!²⁸⁴

The circuit of the 'camosci'-mountain goats- was called that way to convey the sense that inmates would be placed in very far off places, extremely difficult to reach by family members. Tonino Paroli experienced firsthand the shift in tactics brought on by Dalla Chiesa and his testimony conveys a deep sense of pain and frustration at having his personal and physical space continuously violated, to a point of exasperation.

The people who had played a central part in the violence of the Red Brigades, Prima Linea and other armed groups in the 1970s were facing a lifetime of prison maltreatment, humiliation and isolation while they saw that on the outside support for their organizations had been eroded and the prospects of a revolution had entirely vanished. In this context the laws on 'repentance' and 'dissociation' caused a radical rift between those who decided to try to reduce their sentence and gain a few years of freedom, and those who insisted on reasserting their values and beliefs. For these inmates prison became the main focus of their activity, the only place where they still had power and they asserted it desperately and violently to intimidate those who were giving up on the struggle. Killings began to occur on the basis of paranoia and suspicion. In Le Nuove, for example, Pasquale Vile was strangled by four members of the Red Brigades who suspected him of being a carabinieri spy (after killing him they quietly continued eating their pasta, a sign taken by the press as evidence of their complete derangement).²⁸⁵ Perhaps also in response to these types of actions, and to the increasingly senseless killings on the outside many 'terrorists' began to reconsider their participation in the armed struggle and individuals as well as entire groups like Prima Linea, decided that the war was over and to 'dissociate themselves'.

Adriana was one of the 'ex terrorists' who refused to renounce her allegiance to the Red Brigades. She was called back to prison in 1980 after Patrizio Peci, the head of the Turin branch of the Red Brigades and Italy's first 'pentito' testified in court against her and against all his comrades. Adriana then spent a further six years

²⁸⁴ AA.VV, 'Frammenti... di lotta armata e utopia rivoluzionaria', *Controinformazione*, n.4, Milan, 1984, p.5. Cited on the website Luther Blissett, http://www.lutherblissett.net/archive/078-04_it.html (Visited: 4 October 2005).

²⁸⁵ 'La garrota arriva dopo la pastasciutta ucciso in cella alla fine di un 'processo'. Per il feroce delitto delle Nuove quattro terroristi sotto accusa', *Gazzetta del Popolo*, 21 June 1980.

in special prisons all over Italy. She had meetings with her three daughters through glass partitions, talking into phones that almost always distorted sounds or didn't work at all. Adriana's father died while she was in prison and after his death she received even fewer visits from her daughters who came to resent her for abandoning them. During an argument one of her daughters told her that she 'had come back home from prison' as if she 'had gone out to do the shopping' but that things had obviously changed for them, forever. Another daughter, who had a career in film-making which led her to a different city for a major production, gave up on the production to be with her son. When asked she told her mother: 'I grew up without a mother and I don't want to do the same thing to my son'.

Adriana's voice broke frequently when telling me about her daughters. It is the pain of losing them, of having harmed them, that dominates her recollections of her time in prison. Adriana appeared broken and there was no trace of the smiling leader whose picture had graced the newspapers in 1976. The riots were now just a vague memory, one she was not particularly proud of and which seemed to have little meaning to her (she talked about the riots only because I asked her directly and she quickly changed the subject). In Carmelo's wife's words Adriana had 'waged war to the sky' but her wings, on the day I interviewed her, seemed to have melted like wax.

When Adriana first described her arrival in prison she said that guards treated her 'with more respect, like in a war time relationship' (come in un rapporto di guerra). At the time she saw herself engaged in an open war and she saw the sacrifice of her familial life as part of the tough decisions one has to take in wartime. When asked if she thought the struggle had been worthwhile there was a long pause and then she said: 'Well, I thought that indeed since my reason was, it isn't as I said before that I ran away with a lover to the Seychelles, but it was a motivation of an ethical-moral kind which justified...I thought it could be worth while'. Adriana, however, uses the past tense in answering this question, suggesting that it was with the eyes of the time that her actions were worthwhile. She had been engaged in a war and her side lost. It is interesting, however, that Adriana does not see the achievements of the prisoner movement as at least one battle she and her fellow political prisoners won over the system. While the emergency laws and the special prisons were used heavily against Adriana and her companions, their work in the prison and their tireless riots, protests, and letters achieved some major victories for

prisoners and led to improved prison conditions, practical renovations and changes in the law. Perhaps because these changes were minimal in comparison with the larger transformations Adriana and others had envisioned for the whole of Italian society they see these achievements as irrelevant and not internalised as personal victories. They also belong to a world Adriana and her companions were happy to finally leave and they have no desire for their riots and political victories within the prison to be celebrated or commemorated.

Adriana claimed to have 'lost her memory of Le Nuove'. Other prisons such as the female prison in Voghera where she was held in conditions very close to solitary confinement, played a much larger part in her narratives and her traumatic experiences there may have overwritten her memories of Le Nuove. It seemed bizarre to her that people be concerned over the future of Le Nuove and that guided tours were being run inside the building. It was clear that she would never feel the prison as belonging to her and it is extremely unlikely that she or any of her comrades would ever take it upon themselves to be involved in the preservation of the building or its memory. In spite of their lived experiences there and their victories, the prison mostly represented suffering and defeat for them.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has considered the various narratives surrounding three prison riots in Le Nuove: the riots of 1969, 1971 and 1976. While there is a clear consensus and shared representation of the riots of 1969 and 1971, (seen as dramatic and destructive, although there is disagreement over which of the two ushered in the new era of violence and struggle within the prison), the riot of 1976 seems to have failed to claim a space of its own in memory and it blends into the many other riots of the 1970s. The chapter sees the crackdown in the years that followed the 1976 riot as partially explaining this oblivion and it uses the descriptions and recollections of the three riots to trace the history of the reforms, which forever transformed life in the prison.

The wave of riots that shook Le Nuove in those years had been very loud and visible ordeals. Inmates had screamed and banged soup bowls against bars and thrown tiles off the roof, and sympathising family members and protesters had joined their protests, triggering the anger and charges of the police gathered there to prevent

escapes. By the mid 1980s most of Le Nuove's prisoners had been transferred to Le Vallette, the new prison far at the outskirts of Turin. There, even if the new high security nets, CCTV cameras, and electric fences had not made it impossible for inmates to move outside of their sections and onto the roofs, there would nevertheless have been nobody to see rioting prisoners had they decided to protest. Le Vallette, in fact, is surrounded by cement barricades and partitions, highway, and a few empty fields. The new laws giving inmates special incentives to live by the prison rules, with considerable reductions in sentencing for good behaviour, further contribute to the silence of the new prison building.

Nanni Balestrini's novel *Gli Invisibili* describes the end of the prisoner movement precisely by an image of invisible protest in the silence of the night. The final paragraph of his novel (written without punctuation) reads as follows:

at the arranged time in the middle of the night everyone lit the oil of the torches and they stuck these fires in the holes of the grids but there was nobody to see the torches burned a long time and it must have been a nice spectacle from outside all those trembling fires on the black wall of the prison in the middle of that infinite stretch but the only ones who could see the light show were the few drivers that zoomed tiny and very far away on the black ribbon of the highway a few kilometres from the prison or perhaps an airplane that goes by up high but they fly so high up there in the dark silent sky that they don't see a thing

The explosions of prison riots, which repeated themselves throughout the 1970s, and which matched a season of protests and riots in the streets across Italy, started dramatically and ended gradually. They began out of a deep need for improvement of prison conditions and then evolved into a proper political movement, with leaders and negotiators pushing for specific requests, backed by organizations on the outside. Major prison reforms were the achievement of these patient protest movements. At times the riots were used to inmate advantage to reassert the power of the organizations run by political prisoners, to threaten prison authorities, or to create chaos at a strategic time either to delay trials or to exchange information. The riot of 1976 was one of the last riots of this kind, a final assertion of force as well as of frustration for the failure to apply a prison reform, which, for all its faults and limitations, had been a victory for the prisoner movement. Following a rise in violence in the streets the state began to crack down on 'terrorists' inside and outside the prison and instituted special prisons and other repressive policies, which began to

limit the organizational power of prisoners. By the late 1970s, with the kidnapping and killing of Aldo Moro marking a dramatic turning point for the country, riots continued in the prisons but lost their resonance on the outside. Groups were dissolved and prisoners began to worry about their own personal judicial situation, rather than about the aims of their organization. Slowly the prisoner movement was entirely dissolved and the prison returned to its quiet days, far from public view, the hopes and fears of revolution soon forgotten.

THE CHURCH

CHAPTER FIVE



there were several windows who would work for him copying their jobs notes and requests for funding, for permits, for medicines. The help of the typewriter must have been coming constantly in those days when, now empty and bare.

We are taken down a very narrow corridor from which we can look out onto the exercise yard, a vast expanse of concrete partitioned by gray walls full of holes and stains, whose metal support is sticking out and rusting. We move up a set of narrow stairs and then down another long narrow corridor until we feel completely disoriented. A black iron door opens up, like the door to a dungeon and we are transported to a different time, to the early days of the prison when inmates were kept in total isolation. These are the *cubicoles*, a series of small cells with tiny barred windows from which inmates were to follow mass, locked up and observed by the

¹⁶ Photo courtesy of Padre Ruggiero Cipolla.

THE CHURCH



Fig.17-The 1950s chapel altar, which creates a partition wall between the old chapel and the new²⁸⁶

The path to the old prison chapel is obstructed by a series of doors and passages. Orazio opens a door to the right and shows us Padre Ruggero's office: we have to go through it to reach the cubicles. This place used to be called 'la Santa Sede' -the Holy See- by inmates and it was a kingdom apart from the prison, for some years a site of impressive and significant power. It is now bare but it used to be full of papers and inmates coming and going asking for favors. A prison guard was officially assigned to assist Padre Ruggero, the prison chaplain, with all his paperwork and there were several volunteers who would work for him, typing thank you notes and requests for funding, for permits, for assistance. The noise of the typewriter must have been echoing constantly in those four walls, now dusty and bare.

We are taken down a very narrow corridor from which we can look out onto the exercise yard, a vast expanse of cement partitioned by gray walls full of holes and stains, whose metal support is sticking out and rusting. We move up a set of narrow stairs and then down another long narrow corridor until we feel completely disoriented. A black iron door opens up, like the door to a dungeon and we are transported to a different time, to the early days of the prison when inmates were kept in total isolation. These are the *cubicoli*, a series of small cells with tiny barred windows from which inmates were to follow mass, locked up and observed by the

²⁸⁶ Photo courtesy of Padre Ruggero Cipolla.

guards, from the early days of the prison in the 1870s. It was not until 1955, when the church was refurbished and opened up, that inmates were finally allowed to follow mass, sitting out in the open, on wooden pews, like in normal churches.

Orazio turns the lights on and lets us wander down the cubicle corridor. Its walls are black and Orazio explains that what we see are smoke stains from one of the riots in the 1970s, when this area was almost burned down. The space gives the feeling of a wartime air shelter or of a very old wine cellar. The ceiling is very low and I have to bend down slightly to enter one of the cells. The heavy wood and metal door closes behind me. The tiny cell makes me claustrophobic so my eyes wander onto its walls and the inscriptions distract me for a second: 'W Lenin' and further away a face drawn in pencil with an open mouth and thorns on its head, probably an attempt at a Jesus figure, but looking more like Munch's *Scream* next to a half-finished cross...The walls in the tiny cell look like parchment and traces of inscriptions seem to be everywhere though most of them illegible. The entire small cell is like a letter that has been soaked in the rain, with distinct words melted into illegible splashes, patches of sentences readable here and there.

I look through the tiny window and I can see the floor of Padre Ruggero's museum. After the refurbishments in the mid 1950s that area was used as a library for inmates and Padre Ruggero turned it into a museum in the summer of 1976. There are several glass cabinets full of objects, books and photographs, and I can see a wooden chair in the middle of the room as well as the statue of a priest holding a cross who is being pulled by the arm by a desperate man with a ball and chain at his feet. I recognize the figure of S.Cafasso the patron saint of inmates. All these spaces, the *cubicoli*, the museum, the new church are part of the church and they also represent the church's work in the prison from its inception.

This chapter will try to bring out the complexity of church memory in prison. It will begin by a section discussing the strange architecture of the chapel, the ideas behind it and its perception by inmates, and some of the transformations in religious practice in Le Nuove; it will then focus on the figure of Padre Ruggero Cipolla who came to be an embodiment of the church in the prison and a key authoritative figure during his long tenure in the prison. It will consider the ways Padre Ruggero and his assistants dominate the memorial discourses surrounding the prison and the erasures these entail, as they appear explicitly in the prison museum; the chapter will then continue with an analysis of the role of the nuns in the prison and the myths

surrounding them. From these fragments of stories the chapter aims to capture the dual role of the church in the prison as a benevolent support network for inmates but also as a dominant presence working alongside prison authorities, a dual role reflected in the recollections surrounding the church and its workers.

ARCHITECTURE, CODES & 'RELIGIOUS RITES IN THE PENITENTIARY'



Fig.18 -The prison chapel before renovations²⁸⁷

The church in Le Nuove is now a hybrid structure; on one side is a 1950s baroque- style church with marble columns and an ordinary altar, a space for the choir, and open pews. Behind it, and difficult to access, is the last remaining section of the multi-celled chapel, which used to take up the entire space of the church. Entering the old chapel one is faced with an unusual architectural spectacle: a central space where the altar once stood looks onto a white rounded wall full of tiny windows, barred and dark, from which inmates were to look at the priest. The structure of the old church represents a very particular embodiment of a series of utopist ideas about prisons, which circulated across Europe and the United States starting in the late 18th century and which had very practical applications in prison architecture. The two most influential models for prison regimes were known as the Philadelphia model, based on the architecture and the regime established in

²⁸⁷ From the museum in Le Nuove.

Philadelphia's Eastern Penitentiary²⁸⁸ built in 1829 under a plan by Architect John Haviland; and the Auburn model based on the New York prison built in 1817 at Auburn developed by its prison director Elam Lynds who also went on to run the famous prison of Sing Sing.²⁸⁹



Fig.19- Architect's drawing of Eastern Penitentiary in Philadelphia

While they differed in architectural features (the Philadelphia model having radial structure while the Auburn model was based on a double cross shape) both models insisted on a regime of silence and work as key elements for the redemption of inmates. In Philadelphia, where the regime

was first highly influenced by Quaker thinking, the silence was to be absolute and inmates were never to have any contact with other prisoners, to work all the time closed in their cells. In Auburn inmates were also to keep absolute silence but they would meet other inmates in common work-rooms where they would work during the day and then retire to their cells at night.²⁹⁰

For both models religious teaching was to be the only exception to the rule of silence and inmates were to find comfort and redemption in the words of the bible, spoken to them in the midst of their silent lives. It became essential, in order to implement these regimes of silence and disciplined control over inmate bodies, to

²⁸⁸ For a study of this particular prison and its inception see Michael Meranze, *Laboratories of Virtue : Punishment, Revolution, and Authority in Philadelphia, 1760-1835*. Chapel Hill : Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press , 1996.

²⁸⁹ For a good summary of the differences in religious belief behind the two systems of incarceration see Thomas O'Connor, 'What Works, Religion as a Correctional Intervention: Part I', *Journal of Community Corrections*, vol. XIV (2004), no.1, pp. 11-16. See also Dario Melossi and Massimo Pavarini, *The Prison and the Factory: Origins of the penitentiary system*, MacMillan Press, London, 1981, pp. 153-158. See also Michael Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain: The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850*, Penguin Books, Bungay, Suffolk, 1978.

²⁹⁰ Robin Evans writes in *The Fabrication of Virtue. English Prison Architecture, 1750-1840*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982, p. 67: 'Recollection was a self-adjusting recompense for both good and evil. If hell, or for that matter heaven, were nothing but memories, then the way to reproduce hell's effects in prison was to give the criminal mind nothing but its own sordid contents to dwell on. A way had to be found of shutting off all diversions and disturbance. This was one route (...) towards solitary confinement, another practice that would have to rely heavily on architecture for its realization.'

elaborate an architecture which would make these lofty goals practical; over the years various prisons, especially in England but also in central Europe and as far out as Latin America and Japan, experimented with different architectural implementations. The greatest challenge to the regime of silence rested precisely in the layout of the prison chapel as it was very difficult to come up with a structure which could accommodate many inmates at once while keeping them isolated, but which could also make it practical to move them in and out of the chapel quickly. One of the features which registered Le Nuove in the literature of the time it was built as ‘one of the best prisons in Italy’,²⁹¹ a ‘machine for imprisoning’²⁹² for its vanguard implementations of penal theories, was precisely its unique multi-celled chapel.



Fig.20 -The multi-celled chapel wall today

According to the architect Antonio Polani himself, who wrote about his project to the Depute in charge of the competition and plans for the construction of the new prisons in Genoa and Turin:

The most important innovation that I feel I achieved is that relating to the Chapel in the building. Amongst all the questions that arise in forming a

²⁹¹ Box 7306 of the Archivio di Stato di Torino Fondo Casa Circondariale di Torino detta ‘Le Nuove’, contains two notebooks recording some of the prison’s most illustrious guests who came to visit it as a model prison and also to meet and learn from Cesare Lombroso, who was working there at the time. A series of names such as Professor Kanzaburo Katsumoto from the university of Kyoto who visited Le Nuove on April 5, 1902 or Michel Borovifinoff who is described as ‘sous chef de l’administration generale des prisons de Russie’ who came on September 4, all testify to the interest and importance that Le Nuove had as a prison where the latest techniques and theories for treating criminals were being experimented.

²⁹² Vera Comoli Mandracchi, *Il carcere giudiziario di Torino detto ‘Le Nuove’*, Centro Studi Piemontesi, Turin, 1974, p.73.

project for prisons according to the system of isolation, the chapel is the hardest to solve; this because in it there is a need to gather a very large number of inmates, without harming the principle of individual segregation(...) I therefore set myself to creating a new chapel (...) I arranged it so that each of the inmates cannot see any of the others, so that all of them can see the priest, and be seen in the face by the Director or by those who are acting in his stead, while they are attending the divine rituals.²⁹³

This design for the chapel was particularly liked because it combined the principles of Panopticism (also used in the Philadelphia model) by which inmates could be held continuously under the control of prison authorities through an architecture that privileged transparency and compartmentalization through the instrument of the gaze,²⁹⁴ and because it respected the rules of silence imposed by the Italian prison code.

The prison code of 1863, in fact, had maintaining a system of silence as one of its most basic rules. Article 244 stated: 'It is forbidden for inmates to talk and to have amongst themselves any communication in writing, in gestures, in signs and in whatever other way. The law of silence must always and everywhere (...) be rigorously applied. Any singing, any word will always be considered as a violation of the rule of silence'. Visiting the chapel cubicles today it is clear that these strict rules were violated countless times as graffiti in the small cells was used to communicate all sorts of messages to other inmates.



Fig.21 -Inscription celebrating Pierin (Fransa either being last name or France, the place where he might have been arrested) caught 21 March 1916, long live the 10 February 1918 Ale!

²⁹³ Letter from Antonio Polani to Cavalier Ignazio Berruti, 20 October, 1859. Quoted in Comoli-Mandracci, *il carcere di Torino*, ibid. p.106.

²⁹⁴ On panopticism see of course the work of Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, Alan Sheridan trans., Penguin Books, London, 1977. Especially the sections on hierarchical observation pp.170-177 and on Panopticism pp.195-228.

A thorough analysis of all the graffiti in the old prison chapel would require a separate study of its own, perhaps trying to link some of the names that appear on the walls with the remaining judicial records at the Turin courthouse. We can nevertheless see the graffiti as traces of a rebellion, a refusal to be consigned to silence and annihilation, the last remaining traces of lives and times long gone but nevertheless present in the building through these written voices. Some of the graffiti are pure messages of political defiance vaguely set against the religious and anti-Communist backdrop of the church: 'Viva Lenin'; others are expressions of anger or frustration such as 'Shit' dated 5-4-1925; or 'if justice were humane I would not find myself in this hole'. Other messages are more specific, like this declaration of innocence: 'Bubagna pays 18 months- innocent'. Finally there are messages directed explicitly at other prisoners such as the following two messages of goodbye: 'Santin pays two years says goodbye to his friends, stay happy you are still young!' or: 'I am Nino the Roman and I am leaving the 7-12-22 I say goodbye to the good friends'.

To read these messages, written with rough pencils probably smuggled into the cubicle cells, is like eavesdropping on a conversation from very far away. We cannot hear the answers nor see the expressions of those the messages were meant for, nor of the writers themselves. Were the goodbyes exultant or sad for the friends left behind? Did the messages contain a code we cannot decipher? Who were Santin, Bubagna and Nino the Roman? What had they done? Where did they go after they left the prison? These voices, scratched and written into the old church wall make up an inscribed oral history, they all contain within them a wish to transmit a moment to posterity, be it immediate or projected onto many years. By their very nature, however, these scratched messages are just flashes of thought, flashes of time, flashes of experience.

There are graffiti all over the prison and most of them go unseen by visitors to the prison. Only the graffiti in the cubicle chapel are commented on, used as evidence of the horrors of total isolation and of the historical importance of the building. The tour presentation uses the graffiti almost as if it were proof of the existence of an ancient civilization, as reminders of a criminal world to which we have no other access and which is presented as colorful and folkloristic. The graffiti in the cubicles is frozen to a time before the restoration of the church when the old chapel became off limits for inmates and perhaps it is considered old enough to be

historical, unlike some of the vulgar graffiti written on the walls of prison cells which may date back to the 1970s and 1980s.

In spite of the stories of deep distress and blood, including the repeated story about a partisan who wrote in his own blood in his underground punishment cell 'meglio morire che tradire'- better to die than to betray-²⁹⁵ there are no visible graffiti from partisans in Le Nuove, at least not in the cells that are shown to visitors during tours. This is in sharp contrast to other sites such as the Nazi prison in Via Tasso in Rome, where tragic graffiti is still visible and part of a permanent exhibition.²⁹⁶ After the war, unlike the Nazi prison in Via Tasso, Le Nuove continued to be used as a prison and the cells of the condemned men went on to be used as punishment cells for ordinary criminals, any inscriptions painted over or erased by continued usage, the heat and moisture generated by bodies conspiring with the mold to further cover any inscription from the past.

In the archive we can find traces of graffiti, which were promptly erased due to their dangerous content. The bureaucratic machine, which erased the graffiti, reproduced them for posterity on a typewritten sheet, unintentionally re-inscribing them into the prison's intangible heritage. A report from March 1979, two months after the prison guard Giuseppe Lorusso was shot dead begins: 'Object: sentences written presumably with shoe polish on the walls of the first, second and third wing'. During an inspection the Marshall Luigi De Lillo found the following sentences written on the walls: '1) De Lillo, Dascenzo, Incerto, Vasta, Santoro, 10-100-1000 Cotugno- one thing is certain you will pay for everything' (...) 6) Franco you are already dead, 10-100-1000 Lo Russo (...) 8) Killing the guards is an act of love 9) From San Vittore to L'ucciardone only one cry: revolution!' The Marshall De Lillo notes that 'next to every phrase there was the drawn five point star, the stem of the Red Brigades and the inscriptions were written in block characters'.²⁹⁷ The described graffiti were very different from the graffiti scratched in secret in the prison chapel. They were black and audacious, taking over three floors and clearly written for the purposes of intimidation. The graffiti convey the sense of a group voice, set up violently against the prison guards and unashamed to link itself to the murders of

²⁹⁵ From tour by Orazio Toscano.

²⁹⁶ See Arrigo Paladini, *Via Tasso: carcere Nazista*, Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Rome, 1986 and Stanislao Pugliese, *Desperate Inscriptions: Graffiti from the Nazi Prison in Rome 1943-1944*, Bordighera Press, Boca Raton, FL, 2002.

²⁹⁷ Letter dated 16 March 1979 from 'Registro Rapporti diversi agenti' in box 6503 in Fondo Casa Circondariale di Torino detta 'Le Nuove' in Archivio di Stato, Turin.

Giuseppe Lorusso and Lorenzo Cotugno whose deaths seem to be celebrated and used as further assertions of power.²⁹⁸ The big black death threats were promptly erased while the small graffiti in the chapel, though also constituting an infraction of prison rules, were allowed to remain on the walls, as they constituted no real threat. When reading graffiti on the walls today we must therefore be aware that we are only reading those written messages considered too insignificant to bother removing, and those that survived the very rare repainting and refurbishing that occurred in the prison.

The criminal anthropologist Cesare Lombroso,²⁹⁹ who worked for twenty years as prison doctor in Le Nuove studying inmates for his reflections on the links between bodily features, race, gender and criminal tendencies, recorded a large number of graffiti and hidden messages left by inmates in their cells, in the cubicles and in materials such as library books, prison cups and bottles, and tattoos,³⁰⁰ which he then published in a book entitled *Palimpsests from Prison*.³⁰¹ Lombroso was not interested in these messages as forms of communication nor was he interested in the lives behind them. He collected inmate writings as evidence, as scientific data, which he hoped would contribute to a larger model of deviant behavior. Graffiti and drawings (which were often sexual in content), in fact, constituted breaches of the prison rules so they were tangible manifestations of deviant behavior and thus were valuable data to be catalogued. One of the messages which is no longer legible today but that exists in transcribed form in Lombroso's book *Palimpsests from Prison*,

²⁹⁸ For a discussion of the deaths of Giuseppe Lorusso and Lorenzo Cotugno see chapter on the Turrets.

²⁹⁹ A study of Lombroso's work in Le Nuove prison, originally intended to be part of this project, was constrained by the transfer of Lombroso's criminological museum in boxes for the new museum being set up in Turin, so that most of the prisoner artifacts were in storage or sent off to exhibitions elsewhere. Lombroso did base some of his theories on the physical appearance of inmates from the Turin prison but he also worked with dead bodies, skulls and bones of criminals from many other institutions, especially the Regina Coeli prison in Rome. Lombroso has received much academic attention in recent years and a fair and thorough assessment of his work, letters, writings concerning the prison would have been relevant, but was beyond the scope of this project. For more on Lombroso see: Delia Castelnovo Frigessi, *Cesare Lombroso*, Einaudi, Turin, 2003; Mary Gibson, *Born to Crime: Cesare Lombroso and the Origins of Biological Criminology*, Praeger, Westport Connecticut, 2002; David Horn, *The Criminal Body: Lombroso and the Anatomy of Deviance*, Routledge, London, 2003; Pierpaolo Martucci, *Le piaghe d'Italia: i lombrosiani e i grandi crimini economici nell'europa di fine ottocento*, Franco Angeli, Milan, 2002; Nancy Harrowitz, *Anti-semitism, Misogyny and the Logic of Cultural Difference: Cesare Lombroso and Matilde Serao*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln Nebraska, 1994; Renzo Villa, *Il deviante e i suoi segni*, Franco Angeli, Milan, 1985.

³⁰⁰ For a collection of images of these gathered materials, including carved water jugs, writings and sculptures of criminals from Le Nuove and other prisons and psychiatric institutions, see Museo Lombroso di psichiatria e antropologia criminale, *La scienza infelice: il museo di antropologia criminale di Cesare Lombroso*, Giorgio Colombo, Boringhieri, Turin, 1975.

³⁰¹ Cesare Lombroso, *Palimpsesti del carcere*, Bocca, Turin, 1891.

reads: 'When we are disrespectful they put us "under church" (sotto chiesa, in the punishment cells), and it's awful there; but when they make us go to church to hear the sermons they stick us in a hole where if one sits there only half an hour one starts to die suffocated. Nice Church!' This unknown inmate experienced going to church as another form of punishment. His ironic exclamation 'nice church!' suggests that this was not a church at all. This comment also sees the church as spilling out in the rest of the prison, the punishment cells somehow being an extension of the church itself.

I heard a similarly negative reaction to the prison church and the cubicles from Marisa Scala, who was held in Le Nuove for partisan activities together with her brother. In 1944, shortly after her arrest, Marisa said the following to the mother superior, Sister Giuseppina de Muro, who had asked her if she would like to go to church to pray: 'you know mother superior, the church, that cubicle, puts me against God it does (mi mette contro dio, mi mette), it's not right that a human creature should have to pray through a hole, a human creature can even pray on a fire grid but not in a church through a hole!' Here Marisa suggests that the cubicle chapel achieved the opposite of its purported aim; rather than bringing people closer to God it pushed them against him, rather than reminding them of their hope and salvation it denied them their humanity as 'human creatures'.

The Christian ritual itself was deeply curtailed by the chapel architecture and especially by prison regulations. Expressions like 'we are all one body because we all share in one bread' became meaningless in the cubicle services in Le Nuove because at least until the post-war years, at the end of the sermon only the prison guards and prison director would be given communion, inmates were only given communion on the most important religious holidays as stated in Article 302 of the 1863 prison code: 'During the main holidays of the year and more specifically during the Easter period (...) inmates will be invited to approach themselves to the sacraments of penitence and communion.' The same code also did not allow inmates to participate in the service by answering the prescribed phrases such as 'and also with you', 'amen' etc. Article 244 in fact explicitly stated: 'Orations and prayers in the chapel or elsewhere are to be made mentally and spoken out loud only by the chaplain or by those inmates who on his request are for this directly authorized by the director. Collective songs are forbidden also during the religious services'.

It is difficult to know how religious practices were actually conducted prior to the Second World War due to the absence of witnesses. By the time Padre Ruggero was working in the prison, at least after the war, the rules of silence were no longer really enforced. Inmates were allowed to answer during services, singing was done by the chapel choir which was composed of volunteers appointed by Padre Ruggero, and inmates were also increasingly allowed to come out from the *cubicoli* and onto the chapel floor until the work of renovation cut through half of the cubicle church and opened the altar up to normal pews in 1955.

During one of our interviews I asked Padre Ruggero how he used to go about serving communion to inmates when the cubicles were still in place. He explained that he would mostly bring communion to inmates in their cells or he would attend to all the inmates of a wing from an empty cell that would be used ad hoc for that purpose. The Catholic ritual requires that people receive confession before having communion, as they are supposed to be without sin at the time of 'meeting the body of Christ'. Apparently before televisions were introduced in all prison cells, the only available television would be transported to the section where people had asked to have confession and communion. This was probably done for reasons of privacy so as to distract inmates and cover the sound of the conversation between the priest and the person who had called him for confession. Padre Ruggero told me laughing that he heard an inmate say 'va co ti a confese te così ciamuma il televisior!' which in Piedmontese dialect means 'you go too to have confession that way we can call the television!' After Padre Ruggero realized that inmates might not have had the purest intentions when they asked to be approached for confession the practice of bringing in the television was swiftly abandoned.

Religious practice was shaped by existing prison regimes and regulations. The Rocco code of 1931 did not differ much from its 1863 predecessor in terms of religious regulations and silence. While the 1863 code made provisions for non-Catholics, however, allowing those of other religions not to attend the mass, to have access to their own religious leaders when possible (in Piedmont at the time most likely Valdese Protestants or Jews), and to be exempt from mandatory work on the Sabbath and other holy days (for Jews), the Rocco code forced all inmates to attend the Catholic service. This was lamented in an article from an 'inquiry into prison conditions' which appeared on the *Domenica del Corriere* in 1974. The article quoted Professor Neppi Modona's outrage at the lingering practice, which he saw as

clearly in violation of article 19 of the Constitution protecting freedom of religion. The *Domenica del Corriere* then quoted the Rocco code concerning this matter:

Wherever there is a gathering of people, held in place by systems of mandatory discipline, it is not permitted for individuals to abstain from joining. Just as (individuals) cannot abstain from the regulated collective functions of the religion of the state, because these are an expression of that moral discipline which is the basis of every strong system (ordinamento).³⁰²

After the prison reform of 1975 going to church became a matter of choice, although not all those who went were necessarily doing so for their salvation. For many, in fact, it was mostly a social event. Padre Ruggero himself was well aware of this social aspect and considered it a positive thing. The section on 'Religious Rituals in the Penitentiary' in his booklet *Testimonianze*, reads:

Finally it should be stressed that the (...) celebration of festivities (religious and lay) besides renewing the spirit of the inmates represented for them just as many occasions to tend to their person and to present themselves in clean clothes. For the female inmates these were good moments to put on make-up, revive their hairdos and to show off freshly washed and carefully ironed clothes: moments of serenity behind bars.³⁰³

In the repetitive boredom of prison life, the weekly mass provided a diversion, and one which might also have reminded inmates of their normal life outside, when many of them might have dressed up to go to service. Once the cubicle structure was abandoned women had a separate mass in a smaller chapel made especially for their wing, where they would attend service with the nuns and the female guards.

For many inmates the mass also presented a unique opportunity to communicate with fellow defendants about their trial, since in the post-war years the isolation of various sections of the prisons was not implemented as strictly in the chapel as it was in the prison at large. Luca Nicolotti recalls:

The mass worked this way: at 8:30 the guards would come every Sunday and from the front of each section they would call to mass, two or three guards would go and take the small group to the chapel. Technically they were supposed to maintain a certain division of the wings but the atmosphere was that you arrived, Padre Ruggero would act like the man of order and the fact that he showed that he could maintain order guaranteed that you could continue to have the masses that way...

³⁰² 'Inchiesta: Reportage dalle Carceri Italiane', *Domenica del Corriere*, 17 February 1974, p. 57.

³⁰³ Secondo Ercole, *Testimonianze di Padre Ruggero, carcere e resistenza*, Alzani Editore, Pinerolo (TO), 2003, p. 45.

Here Luca Nicolotti depicts Padre Ruggero as consciously contributing to an opening of prison rules for the benefits of the inmates. Nicolotti suggests that Ruggero put on a 'strong man' performance as the only way he had of ensuring that the masses would continue in the informal way they had been conducted up to that point. This also allowed inmates a certain freedom to meet and talk and ensured that many more inmates would request to go to mass than they otherwise would have.

While most masses in Le Nuove were held in the chapel and reoccurred for many years uninterrupted, during Nazi occupation inmates from the German wing were not allowed to attend services. Kept in total isolation and largely in the dark, in extremely harsh hygienic conditions, pestered by blood-sucking insects and their own festering wounds, for practicing Jews and Catholics, being deprived of religious ritual was a further punishment. Bruno Simioni, an old Communist partisan who claimed he didn't remember much from Le Nuove and simply wanted me to interview him on the phone to get it over with, spoke to me very briefly about his internment in Le Nuove but he recalled a mass which he heard down the corridor, in which the Cardinal Maurilio Fossati spoke to the inmates through a loudspeaker.

The voice of the cardinal and the familiar words of his service were probably the only non-threatening words Bruno heard during his period of interrogation and isolation and this left a strong impression. Apparently the Cardinal performed more than one of those masses by loudspeaker during the war and in one in particular, the last he would celebrate in the prison before the liberation, he used the mass as a way of secretly reassuring inmates of the imminent liberation. He said that 'with the arrival of the spring red flowers were reaching the valleys and showing their splendor after a long winter, regenerating the land like the blood of Christ who died for us on the cross...'³⁰⁴

Over the years the church in Le Nuove served as a theater for hundreds of masses, which repeated themselves year after year following the Catholic calendar. Besides the ordinary Sunday masses there were several religious festivities: from the Epiphany, to the festivities relating to the most important Catholic saints and in particular to various patron saints of the religious orders active in the prison, to the patron saints of prison guards and prisoners, to the more important holidays such as Christmas and Easter. Weddings and funerals occurred as rare occasions and outside

³⁰⁴ From an interview with Ennio Pistoì.

relatives were sometimes allowed to attend, if there were no security issues to prevent it. There were also many cases in which inmates had not received sacraments such as the first communion and confirmation and they would go through the necessary ceremonies in the church after following a catechism course with the priest and a series of bureaucratic exchanges with their town of origin and their local parish for getting access to official documents.

The church today stands empty though every fortnight members of the organization *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola* (the main organization involved in the preservation of Le Nuove whose work I will discuss in greater depth in the chapter on the tour) still gather together and attend mass in the new part of the chapel. Sitting there I try to imagine what the mass must have been like with half the parishioners closed off in little cells, looking down through bars like circus animals in transit while the rest stood looking at them in uniform. It is hard to imagine a mass in which all those attending were men, wearing the same gray colored striped uniform and forced to participate but remaining silent while one whole wing of the prison stayed behind, isolated and under Nazi control.

In the cold sadness of the empty place it is hard to imagine the jokes, and the fun, the voices raised high, the intimacy of the ordinary rhythm of religious practice in the post-war years. But there is no doubt that the church represented a source of strength and hope in prison for many while at the same time also representing another institution of power within a highly constrained and regimented place. The following sections on Padre Ruggero and on the Nuns will highlight how this power is remembered as well as the traces that their role in the prison has left after their service there ended.

PADRE RUGGERO



Fig.22 -Padre Ruggero with his Fiat 127 in Saluzzo, 1998³⁰⁵

It is impossible to write about the role of the church in this prison without getting entirely absorbed in narratives surrounding Padre Ruggero Cipolla, a Franciscan father who served as prison chaplain in Le Nuove between 1944 and 1994 (he also continued his work in the prison Le Vallette when most prisoners were transferred there in 1987) and whose reputation in the prison, at least amongst prisoners and prison workers, verges on the legendary. Padre Ruggero is best known in the press for having assisted partisans who were being executed by the Nazis during the Second World War, but prison workers, guards and prisoners also praise him for his impressive managerial abilities, for his many practical contributions to the prison and for his often key role in convincing prisoners to calm down and surrender during prison riots. During his heyday in the immediate post-war years, and at least until the prison reform of 1975, he held significant power in the prison and he was even rumored to have been responsible for the replacement of a prison director whom he didn't like.³⁰⁶

Padre Ruggero is 93 years old and lives in a large and almost empty convent up on a hill in the town of Saluzzo, in the hill country of Piedmont. In two small and poorly heated rooms he holds his archive, neatly arranged in boxes with a complex indexing system, put together by a volunteer who now calls himself Padre Ruggero's

³⁰⁵ Photo courtesy of Padre Ruggero Cipolla.

³⁰⁶ From an anonymous interview.

personal secretary, Secondo Ercole. The archive contains photographs and documents that Padre Ruggero gathered in the prison over the years, from the notebooks he had especially assigned inmates fill out with weekly summaries of the main events that occurred in the prison (called *diari e cronache*) to posters from the prison plays and calendars of sports events. The archive also contains recordings on super 8 of soccer matches and other events, which would be shown inside the prison's closed circuit television system in the 1970s, as well as tape recordings of messages Padre Ruggero gathered from relatives, which he would broadcast in the prison during the main religious holidays.

Secondo Ercole, a retired Fiat manager, recalls meeting the old Franciscan brother in 1997 and being fascinated and moved by his stories. When he found out that Padre Ruggero had several boxes of prison material stashed under his bed, he volunteered to organize it. Secondo Ercole is very concerned about the future of Padre Ruggero's archive given that Franciscan fathers have a tradition of burning all of their fellow fathers' possessions when they die. Perhaps in hopes of preserving the most interesting material from destruction and oblivion, Secondo Ercole has been recording Padre Ruggero's stories and producing small publications of his material.

Padre Ruggero himself was a prolific writer before arthritis made writing too painful. In 1945 he published the book *I miei condannati a morte*-‘my condemned men’-about the resistance fighters he assisted during the war. The book was very successful in small religious bookstores and it was reprinted in a second edition in 1997, a third edition in 1998 and a fourth edition in 2002.³⁰⁷ Padre Ruggero oversaw the publication of a monthly prison newspaper called *Dalle Nuove*, first published in January 1959 (and whose successor is still published today as *Dalle Nuove al Lorusso Cotugno ex Vallette*³⁰⁸) in which he regularly wrote a column and co-wrote and co-edited many of the articles. After retiring he published *Un francescano dietro*

³⁰⁷ Padre Ruggero, *I “miei” condannati a morte*, Il Punto, Turin, 2002. (the first edition, published by SATET in 1945 was published at Fiat's expense and the profit from the book was given to the families of the fallen partisans)

³⁰⁸ This publication is produced by the prison authorities in collaboration with the priests and some religious organizations such as the Missionari della Consolata. In the early days of its publication Padre Ruggero managed to get funding from local parishes and used parts of their small parish publications within the monthly publication to make printing cheaper. In the 1970s *Dalle Nuove* started to contain important judicial information and explanations about the prison reform and prisoners rights. It also contained a monthly section ‘Dalla mia cella’ in which inmates were encouraged to write their thoughts and experiences.

le sbarre 1944-1994, in which he highlighted the most important and moving moments of his long career in the prison.³⁰⁹

Since starting as Padre Ruggero's personal secretary Secondo Ercole has published four collections of the Franciscan's memories: the first was a small pamphlet-like booklet published by Alzani Editore called *Testimonianze di Padre Ruggero. Carcere e Resistenza*, which focused on Padre Ruggero's memories of the prison during the war.³¹⁰ The following three books, *Padre Ruggero ieri ed oggi; Archivio storico "Padre Ruggero"*; and *Padre Ruggero, vocazione religiosa e carcere*,³¹¹ essentially all describe and summarize information and material found in Padre Ruggero's archive. The works, published in increasingly elegant and expensive format, celebrate a life dedicated to the prison and further consolidate Padre Ruggero's reputation as a holy man and somehow an 'embodiment' of the prison.

Every informant I spoke to, with the exception of female inmates and a couple of political prisoners who had little contact with him, asked me if I had or told me that I should speak to Padre Ruggero. He is a 'dignitary of memory' to use Annalisa Tota's expression,³¹² seen as a receptacle of stories, of experience, of lost time, one who by his special status is seen as having a greater entitlement to speak for the prison and who is perceived as an essential 'source'. This role as dignitary of memory is not just attributed to him for his long service in prison-50 years- but also because it is assumed that his role as priest gave him a special insight into the prison, and its most personal, secret aspects. Padre Ruggero did indeed witness countless human tragedies over the years and became very close to hundreds of inmates. He served the role of confessor, something, which in a prison could sometimes involve very serious 'sins' as well as serious crimes.

Padre Ruggero's tenure in the prison covered a time of deep transformation both in prison and on the outside. He began his work while the city of Turin was under Nazi occupation. Each day the Nazis and the forces of the Republic of Salò sent out convoys of Jews and Communist prisoners, which would leave the prison

³⁰⁹ Padre Ruggero Cipolla, *Un francescano dietro le sbarre 1944-1994*, Il Punto, Turin, 2000.

³¹⁰ Secondo Ercole, *Testimonianze di Padre Ruggero. Carcere e resistenza*, Alzani, Pinerolo (To), 2003.

³¹¹ Secondo Ercole, *Padre Ruggero ieri ed oggi*, Grafica Nizza, Collegno (To), 2001; *Archivio Storico "Padre Ruggero"*; *Convento S. Bernardino-Saluzzo*, Grafica Nizza, Collegno (To), 2003 and *Padre Ruggero, vocazione religiosa e carcere*, Comitato nessun uomo è un'isola, Turin, 2004.

³¹² Annalisa Tota, *La Città Ferita*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2003.

for concentration camps while others would be executed in Turin at the shooting range at Il Martinetto. After the 25 of April 1945 the city was liberated but it was still severely damaged from two years of heavy bombing. Retaliations against Fascists occurred in and around the prison and in the final days of the war Padre Ruggero found himself assisting Fascist prisoners. After the war the prisons were initially terribly overcrowded and food, which was scarce on the outside, barely made it to inmates. This accounted in part for the riots of 1945 during which two inmates were wounded by gunfire³¹³ and where Padre Ruggero claims to have played an important part in restoring order. In his account he was able to single-handedly convince inmates to return to their cells by promising them warm soup, which he obtained from a nearby warehouse.³¹⁴ After an initial period of unrest and media attention due to the continued civil war inside prison walls, with strong tensions between ex Fascists and ex partisans, which culminated in the amnesty of 1947,³¹⁵ prisons soon fell back into oblivion. Still under the stringent rules of the Rocco code (which I have discussed in the roof and cell chapters) inmates lived most of their days locked up in badly heated and pest-infested cells. During that time Padre Ruggero and his assistant priests were the only source of entertainment, sport and education in the prison. Little by little Padre Ruggero built a network of outside sponsors and convinced various industries to open workshops in the prison where inmates could learn a trade (and the businesses could thrive on cheaper labour). In 1969 the first prison riot brought these productions to an end by severely damaging the equipment necessary to fabricate plastic flowers and metal scales. This riot was the first real challenge to Padre Ruggero's authority. Throughout the 1970s Padre Ruggero continued to be an important point of reference in the prison, especially during times when prison directors were absent and resigning one after the other out of fear of terrorist intimidation and overwhelmed by the riots and protests affecting the prison with greater and greater insistence.

³¹³ See: '1500 detenuti in rivolta alle Carceri "Nuove"', *La Nuova Stampa*, 27 December 1945, p.2; and 'Rivolta alle Nuove. Forza pubblica e autobline bloccano ancora le carceri', *La Nuova Stampa*, 28 December 1945, p.2; and 'Nuovi conati di ribellione stroncati. I carabinieri sparano: due detenuti feriti', *La Nuova Stampa*, 29 December 1945, p.2; and finally 'E' tornata la calma alle carceri "nuove"', *La Nuova Stampa*, 30 December 1945, p.2. The main reason for the riots was cited in the article as being the slowness of the judicial process facing the inmates as well as the lack of clarity on their individual cases.

³¹⁴ See 'La rivolta nel carcere di Torino' in Secondo Ercole, *Testimonianze di Padre Ruggero, carcere e resistenza*, Alzani Editore, Pinerolo (To) 2003, p.27.

³¹⁵ See Appendix.

The prison director, Surace, who was called to work in the prison in 1979, during the worst period of crisis in Le Nuove right after the most spectacular prison riots and after the assassination of prison guards Cotugno and Lorusso, said about Padre Ruggero:

He was able to keep the inmates calm, he was always full of care for them, he helped them...he interacted a lot with them, there was no other personnel beside him beside the security personnel. When there were riots by terrorist organizations they tried to make the prison explode, they refused to go back to their cell...in those moments only Ruggero was able to solve the situation, always...

This prison director saw Padre Ruggero as a crucial ally during that difficult time, the only person who could really relate to inmates and re-establish order. He also suggested that part of Ruggero's power lay precisely in being the only person in the prison who was not part of the guard staff. Here Surace disregards the various prison administrators like Gambera who claim to have taken an active part in calming riots.

Several of my informants acknowledged Padre Ruggero's role 'in the frontlines' during the most difficult times in the prison, but they then also claimed such a role for themselves. Inspectors Farina and Gambera were the most vocal in claiming to have had a special relationship with inmates and to have always been the first to handle riots. Only Padre Ruggero gets this recognition of his role from others, however, while the lower level administrators, who probably were often called in to intervene, are only acknowledged by themselves. Like in the case of Sister Giuseppina de Muro's crossing of the city of Turin to get orders during the liberation of the prison, which I will discuss in some detail later in this chapter, it might be that the image of a Franciscan father rushing to calm 'terrorists' down during a deadly riot, wearing his gown and holding a rosary has a much more compelling resonance than a series of actions taken by institutional bureaucrats.

James Fentress and Chris Wickham articulate this phenomenon explicitly in their work *Social Memory: New Perspectives on the Past*, when they write that 'Images can be transmitted socially only if they are conventionalized and simplified: conventionalized because the images have to be meaningful for an entire group; simplified because in order to be generally meaningful and capable of transmission,

the complexity of the image must be reduced as far as possible'.³¹⁶ Padre Ruggero's charismatic image is the most compelling simplified image of the troubled times facing the prison during riots and his presence erases the contributions of other actors, who may have also had a significant role in those events.

None of my informants told me anything negative about Padre Ruggero (with the exception of Farina who said that he and Padre Ruggero had a falling out over the disciplining of one of Farina's colleagues accused of violence against inmates and who Farina defended). During the riot of 1969, however, part of the rage of prisoners was clearly played out against the church and directly against Padre Ruggero's personal quarters. This aspect was not discussed by any of my informants and least of all by Padre Ruggero, but it may capture a prisoner sentiment, which may have seen the priest as deeply involved in the system of power and oppression being challenged by the riots. Padre Ruggero talked about the punishment cells:

For the more serious crimes (inmates) were punished with the containment beds on which the unlucky ones were tied hands and feet with thick leather belts and were forced there half naked for a certain number of days (...) The central hole was used for defecating in a container placed beneath the bed. I would visit them daily, beside comforting them verbally I often helped them smoke a cigarette. More often than not I would tell the prison director about the feelings of repentance I encountered during the visits to reduce the length of the punishment. I should say that, according to the old prison code, the chaplain was part of the 'disciplining council', later not anymore.³¹⁷

This passage captures the fundamental ambiguity of the priest's role in prison: on one hand he was trying to reduce the suffering of inmates, but on the other he was clearly part of the system which constrained the inmates' body and inflicted the harshest punishments.

In the same passage Padre Ruggero pointed out how the 'cells where I met the martyrs of the Second Risorgimento were the same in which I comforted those who were punished on the containment beds'.³¹⁸ Down in the dark recesses of the prison's basement Padre Ruggero met inmates in deep distress and did so in his role as priest. In the first instance, however, Padre Ruggero is in the presence of 'martyrs', whom he helps to re-examine their sins and make their peace with God, to forgive their assailants. In the second Padre Ruggero sees his main role as trying to

³¹⁶ James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory: New Perspectives on the Past*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1992, pp.47-48.

³¹⁷ 'Punizioni in carcere secondo il "codice Rocco"' in Secondo Ercole, *Testimonianze di Padre Ruggero. Carcere e resistenza*, Alzani, Pinerolo (To), 2003, p.6.

³¹⁸ *Testimonianze*, ibid. p.6.

get the inmates to show that they are sorry, and only then does he assist them by putting in a good word with the director. The continuity between the suffering inflicted on the 'martyrs' and that inflicted on ordinary criminals before the 1975 prison reform is only seen by Padre Ruggero to be linked to the physical space in which their punishment is occurring, but the ambiguity of his own role and his collaboration in prisoner suffering seems to be lost to Padre Ruggero who does not worry about how his story of the containment beds might be interpreted. His public persona as a holy man who endured the spectacle of the suffering of the 'martyrs of the second Risorgimento' (which I will discuss in the following section), much like his predecessor S. Cafasso, ensures that he is seen and talked about only in benign terms and he thus has no worries about how his further work in the prison might be remembered.

Padre Ruggero is remembered fondly as very hard working, generous and efficient, deeply devoted to inmates and to improving their condition, and he was generally liked both by inmates and by prison guards. G.R. talked about what the older prisoners told him about Padre Ruggero:

The old ones told me that Padre Ruggero other than being the chaplain in Le Nuove prison was a, man, one who really had power, in other words he was one who counted for something and I want to make a comparison if you go to 'Le Vallette' today the two who are there they count less than nothing all they do is have their mass and that's it. Instead he (Padre Ruggero) in those days even before '85 was one who I am not saying could let people out but who counted a lot...in other words he was one...the important thing was that he was well liked both by inmates and by the guards.

Padre Ruggero is famed to have held considerable power and his word could make a difference in someone's trial or transfer to another prison. Until the prison reform of 1975 Padre Ruggero was part of the Consiglio di Disciplina, which gave him a vote when it came to deciding punishment or transfers of unruly prisoners. To be on Padre Ruggero's good side could thus be extremely valuable in times of riots and unrest.

Padre Ruggero's reputation continued well after his power was no longer present in Le Nuove. Gigi Rossetti recalled that 'Padre Ruggero would come by with wine and it happened that with my cellmate we were drunk four days in a row. Oil, salt, detergents, dried fruit, we had fruit salad like crazy. I ate the whole time, it was almost like a family'. If the cell sometimes felt like a family Padre Ruggero

often played the role of the grandfather or the generous uncle. He was especially attentive during the holidays when he made sure that inmates had beer, wine, chocolates and other exceptional goods to celebrate with. Luca Nicolotti talked about how much organizational skill providing these goods entailed:

For each activity Padre Ruggero had a study group behind it and imagine what incredible things he organized because behind all that there was enormous difficulty to get permits, contact with judges, authorization to distribute the packages which he made for everybody, for the children of inmates and of prison guards. He would send out the prison guards to buy things then he would give out chestnuts on the first of November and the packages at Christmas and Easter...

At the height of his power Padre Ruggero had a flexibility of movement and of material resources, which no other individual or group had inside the prison. An extreme example of this was his successful plea to have the American Circus, with elephants and horses, come perform for inmates in the courtyard of the prison.³¹⁹ Nicolotti noted that: 'In his own small way, until he was there all the charity activities in the prison were completely self-financed while today Don Stavarengo, that chaplain, they cry misery and in the end they turn to Caritas to have a few coins because there no longer is that kind of skill'. While Padre Ruggero's initiatives were clearly the product of his skill and ingenuity he also worked in a time in which prison authorities were probably willing to close a blind eye and to allow extra freedom to the priest given that conditions in prison were so horrific. The changing power of the priest in prison is also a reflection of the effects of the reform on the prison church.

Following the changes implemented with the prison reform of 1975 and then again with that of 1986 (which mostly affected his work in the prison Le Vallette) Padre Ruggero saw his power in prison eroded. In January of 1988 he was arrested on grounds of 'crime of corruption, *falso ideologico*- falsity in public document- and other' having provided communication and aid to a prisoner against prison rules, but freed the next day, all charges dropped.³²⁰ The days of his easy circulation in and out of the prison, of his office being the 'santa sede' thus representing a power with special and exceptional status inside the prison, were over. The end of Padre

³¹⁹ See 'Circo americano alle Nuove', *Stampa Sera*, 9 November 1973, cited by Secondo Ercole, *Padre Ruggero ieri e oggi*, p.83.

³²⁰ Alberto de Stefano, 'Mi hanno arrestato perchè amo i carcerati', *Gente*, 11 February 1988, no.6, pp.109-110 cited by Secondo Ercole in *Padre Ruggero Ieri e Oggi*.

Ruggero's reign, referred to by Luca Nicolotti as 'la decadenza di Padre Ruggero'- the demise of Padre Ruggero, is lamented by prisoners who saw a replacement of a more small scale, human-to-human regime with the cold and inflexible bureaucratization of the new regime which now reigns in the new prison.

PADRE RUGGERO AS WITNESS



Fig.23 -Padre Ruggero praying in front of the body of Giuseppe Lorusso, 19 January 1979.³²¹

Padre Ruggero claims that 'every brick in Le Nuove is a witness to tears, to pain and to blood' and he himself was such a witness, during the Second World War as well as over the many years that followed when he saw acts of self mutilation, suicides and when he arrived too late to give the last rites to the young policemen who were shot dead by the Red Brigades outside the prison and to the body of Giuseppe Lorusso left in his blood on the pavement outside his home (see figures 9 and 23).³²² Padre Ruggero stood looking down, praying, in his dark robe like an angel of death, watching the dead or the dying, each time a re-enactment of previous deaths, 'souls' leaving their bodies in the same inexorable way be they the souls of partisan resistance fighters or thieves, be their bodies riddled in bullets or torn open by razor blades.

³²¹ From Secondo Ercole, *Padre Ruggero, vocazione religiosa e carcere*, Comitato Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola, Grafica Nizza, Turin, 2001, p.109.

³²² The two policemen were Salvatore Lanza and Salvatore Porceddu, killed on 15 December 1978. See Chapter Three for a further discussion of Giuseppe Lorusso's killing of 19 January 1979.

For the old father as well as for his admirers, however, Padre Ruggero's work during the war is seen as by far the most significant aspect of his service in the prison. During the war and in the years immediately following Padre Ruggero assisted more than eighty men who were condemned to death. He watched them die, and he personally informed their families of their death and their last wishes. He did so together with three other priests/fathers but these fathers are rarely talked about. Padre Ruggero also assisted the 'monsters of Villarbasse'³²³ who were the last people to be condemned to death in Italy and for that reason he has appeared on several talk shows (the most famous being the 'Maurizio Costanzo Show') and he is periodically interviewed by journalists writing about the death penalty.³²⁴ It is these stories, of tragic events, which occurred in the first four years of his service in Le Nuove, which people insist I should hear, and which grant Padre Ruggero his particular authority as witness.



Fig.24 -Padre Ruggero with the chair of the condemned men. Photo used for the cover of his *Le Testimonianze di Padre Ruggero*. Courtesy of Padre Ruggero Cipolla.

³²³ For a popular description of the crime of the Villarbasse bandits see Renzo Rossotti, *Villarbasse-Cascina Fatale*, Il Punto, Turin, 2002. For a discussion of its significance in the post-war context see my article 'Nazi Demons and Sicilian Monsters. The 'Monsters of Villarbasse', Piedmontese Anxieties, and the Wounds of World War II' *Monsters and the Monstruous Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil*, Paul Yoder and Peter Mario Kreuter (eds.) e-book 2nd edition: ISBN1-904710-21-2 from the conference on Monsters and the Monstruous- Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil, held in Budapest 10-12 May 2004. The book from the proceedings is in press with Rodopi publishers.

³²⁴ The Catholic church in Italy and the Vatican became particularly vocal against the death penalty in the mid 1990s with John Paul II's Enciclica *Evangelium Vitae* of 1995 and Catholic groups, the most prominent of which are probably the organization 'Nessuno Tocchi Caino' and the 'Comunità di Sant'Egidio' that are actively campaigning for the end of the death penalty across the world. The death penalty was abolished early in Italy, with the codice Zanardelli of 1897, but it was re-instated during fascism and abolished again in 1948.

I spoke with Padre Ruggero on five occasions and although he was always extremely open and available, our interviews were slightly frustrating because, perhaps precisely because he had been interviewed so many times before, it was difficult to get him to stray from his story-format based on anecdotes, almost identical to the memorial anecdotes he recorded in his books. His stories are presented in a genre which conforms to Padre Ruggero's role as a preacher and spiritual father and they have become a central part of Padre Ruggero's self-presentation, which is highly theatrical. Alessandro Portelli has written extensively about the influence of the interviewer and the interactive nature of oral history. In his article on 'The peculiarities of oral history' Portelli notes that 'Researchers introduce specific distortions: informants tell them what they believe they want to be told'.³²⁵ The striking aspect of my interviews with Padre Ruggero was that he would rarely interact with me. Any one of my questions would be quickly dispatched and turned into a long monologue recited like a story whose language also strikingly sounded written rather than oral. These anecdotes would be presented to me in very dramatic tones, and would sometimes trigger strong emotional reactions in the priest, who would cry and raise his voice at particularly painful points. During interviews I had a sense that what he thought I expected of him, as well as what journalists probably expect of him, is a performance of suffering, and as a witness of brutality and violence he also carries the weight of conveying the pain and nobility of those he calls martyrs.

Padre Ruggero's memories of the Second World War, however, have become obstacles, screens, which block out the rest of the story. They are also, strangely, 'safe' memories, at least those referring to the 'martyrs of the martinetto',³²⁶ because some level of celebratory consensus surrounds them. These memories work as screens for blocking out the stories of the Fascists that Padre Ruggero assisted after the war, for example. They also work as screens for others besides the old priest, for example one of the prison guards I interviewed turned to them as a way of avoiding an uncomfortable twist in our interview.

³²⁵ Alessandro Portelli, 'The Peculiarities of Oral History', *History Workshop* (1981) no.12, p.103.

³²⁶ The Martinetto was a place on the outskirts of the city where the execution of anti-Fascists took place.

I was having tea with the ex prison guard Teodoro Romano and his wife and Romano's wife was telling me about inmates and self-harm. She said: 'The women sometimes would undress...(laughter) when they wanted to stay out, they didn't want to go back to their cell to avoid going back in they undressed and made a big fuss (facevano l'ira di dio) then...' Romano interrupted her abruptly and said: 'Padre Ruggero spent a lifetime there, he's 92 years old but considering his age he is still lucid! And when the SS were here he had to get the inmates to take them to the shooting range'. Romano may have been uncomfortable about the conversation turning to his role in the *squadretta* (the small squad of guards) that would be called to intervene when women went out of control and screamed and got undressed. Shifting the topic to Padre Ruggero was 'safe' because he is a person that commands respect and also because the painful story of the condemned men is a story that everybody can relate to and be moved by. Romano might have hoped to re-establish an even grounding with me by sharing that reference and distracting me from his wife's story, which might have led me to think badly of him as a perpetrator of violence.

It is not my intention here to downplay Padre Ruggero's war stories, only to point out how these stories, or rather reference to them, hold a special status in the recollection of events from Le Nuove, and how perhaps precisely by their power they obstruct other more recent stories. We should now take the time to describe one of the many anecdotes that Padre Ruggero shares with anyone who comes to interview him. The story is about Lorenzo Biaciotto, the first man Padre Ruggero assisted in death.

In November 1944 Padre Ruggero had just started his service in Le Nuove, as a replacement for two priests of the missionaries of the Consolata, who had been 'too active in their assistance of partisans',³²⁷ when he was asked to prepare Lorenzo Biaciotto spiritually before his execution. Lorenzo, arrested for partisan activities, was twenty-one years old and looked like a teenager. Padre Ruggero lent Lorenzo his crucifix to hold onto during his execution and, Ruggero says in a trembling voice: 'one of the bullets hit him straight in the forehead and the blood fell on the crucifix that the young man was holding. I considered that blood the consecration of the

³²⁷ Words of the Cardinal Maurilio Fossati, who apparently put the priests in a safe place protecting them from the Nazis who wanted to arrest them, and asked Padre Ruggero to replace them. Reported in Secondo Ercole, *Padre Ruggero: vocazione religiosa e carcere*, *ibid.*, p.43.

crucifix, that's another reason why it remained very precious to me'. That afternoon Lorenzo's mother went to the prison with home-baked bread from her village. She asked Padre Ruggero: 'Father, did they send him to Germany? How will I get warm clothes to him? It's going to be cold there, I have to get him some wool shirts!' Padre Ruggero says he answered: 'Madam, I am afraid that your son will no longer be needing any clothes, just prayers' at which point he adds that 'the poor woman fainted and only came to thanks to the loving care of the nuns'.³²⁸ This story, like many of the other stories about Padre Ruggero's condemned men, whom he called "his" condemned men in his book, does not so much focus on Lorenzo (whom we know little about other than that he looked young) as on Padre Ruggero and his role in assisting the young man in his death as well as suggesting the importance of prayer to his mother. In telling the story of Lorenzo's death it is as though Padre Ruggero is suggesting that Lorenzo's blood was spilled *for* Padre Ruggero's crucifix, to consecrate it with his blood. Padre Ruggero is clearly taking a poetic license in this description of the brutal death of the young man, one that strengthens his own sense of mission and makes him the primary witness of heroic sacrifice.

This tendency to tell his story in anecdotal form and of highlighting his own religious role could at first seem like an act of simple self-aggrandizing. However, when Padre Ruggero tells his story, especially as he reaches the moment in the story when he has to inform Lorenzo's mother of the death of her son, his voice cracks, his hands tremble and his eyes fill with tears. Padre Ruggero gives the impression of a man who has never been able to recover from a repeated and deeply traumatic experience. To take on the role of the witness and to keep his personal traumatic wounds open, to constantly highlight the brutality of the moments he witnessed and the sacrifice and the blood of the men who died before him, may have been his only coping techniques.

Padre Ruggero's storytelling, and continued mental and narrative return to a time when he had to watch men, whom he had spent emotionally charged hours with, be shot in front of him, could very easily be seen as a manifestation of post-traumatic stress. Cathy Caruth in her introduction to the book *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, suggests that most of the descriptions of the complex and contested definitions of post-traumatic stress disorder agree that: 'there is a response,

³²⁸ Account reported in Secondo Ercole, *Testimonianze di Padre Ruggero. Carcere e resistenza*, Alzani, Pinerolo (To), 2003, pp.7-8.

sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event (...) which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing (...) and possibly also increased arousal to (...) stimuli recalling the event'.³²⁹ Padre Ruggero is receptive to interviews and to commemorative situations in which he is asked to retell his traumatic experiences. His recollections are perfectly identical to each other every time, and when he recites them it is as though he were being 'visited' by the story that seems to take control and precedence over any interaction Padre Ruggero may be having with his interviewers or audiences. Caruth writes: 'The pathology consists rather solely in the *structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event'.³³⁰ Padre Ruggero indeed seems 'possessed' by the images of blood, which he witnessed and which he feels compelled to continue to recount.

For Secondo Ercole the striking consistency in Padre Ruggero's frequent retelling of the same stories is proof of their truth value and of Padre Ruggero's legitimacy as a witness. Cathy Caruth, however, notes that modern analysts have been surprised by the striking *literality* of traumatic flashbacks:

It is this literality and its insistent return which thus constitutes trauma and points towards its enigmatic core: the delay or incompleteness in knowing, or even in seeing, an overwhelming occurrence that then remains, in its insistent return, absolutely *true* to the event. It is indeed this truth of traumatic experience that forms the center of its pathology or symptoms (...) If Post Traumatic Stress Disorder must be understood as a pathological symptom, then it is not so much a symptom of the unconscious, as it is a symptom of history. The traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess.³³¹

This seems to be the case for Padre Ruggero and for his entire production of memoirs and public performances. Padre Ruggero has become 'the symptom of a history that he cannot entirely possess' because it is still deeply traumatic and because he was alone in the experience and cannot, for as much as he tries, ever really share it.

³²⁹ Cathy Caruth, 'Introduction', *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Cathy Caruth (ed.), The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1995, p.4.

³³⁰ Caruth, *ibid.* pp.4-5.

³³¹ Caruth, *ibid.* p.5.

During my third or fourth visit to Padre Ruggero in his monastery up in Saluzzo he took out Lorenzo's crucifix and asked me to kiss it. I felt pressed to comply and it was clear from his body language that I should consider this a special honour, which he only bestows upon people on special occasions. The experience was deeply disturbing to me, and I was not able to bring myself to discuss it with him. What did it mean? Did he think that the kisses that various people left on the crucifix over the years were refreshing and honouring the blood of the dead man? Were those people to feel blessed by the cross as if by a holy reliquary or icon? Was this his personal way of honouring the dead, and sacralizing their memory? Or were we to share the pain and horror, which he felt upon seeing the blood spilt on the cross, in our horror at having to kiss it imagining the moment the blood first reached it?

There is always a tension in the ways Padre Ruggero presents the prison's past, between wishing to memorialize the dead, and appropriating the dead's suffering to gain a certain authority. This becomes particularly explicit in his museum, which Padre Ruggero put together in 1976 at a time of crisis for prison authorities and the prison church.

THE PRISON MUSEUM IN THE CHAPEL

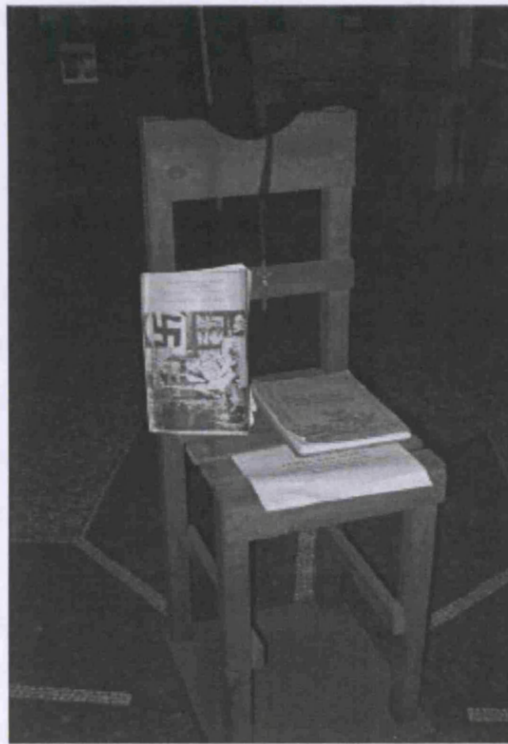


Fig.25 -Copy of the chair of the condemned men

The museum in the chapel was put together by Padre Ruggero during the hot months of the summer of 1976, while inmates were staging an organized riot of wide proportion and calling for improvements to their conditions, changes which would also greatly curtail the power of the priest in the prison. It is not surprising then, that the museum sets out to celebrate the work conducted by the church in prison over the years, and that it explicitly linked the priest and his fellow religious figures such as the nun Giuseppina de Muro and the cardinal Maurilio Fossati, to what has been called the 'civic religion of the resistance',³³² which would somehow hark back to a time in which the church and members of the political left could be seen as having been allied.³³³

³³² See Stephen Gundle, 'The 'civic religion' of the Resistance in post-war Italy', *Modern Italy*, vol.5 (2000), no.2, pp.113-132.

³³³ Several books in museum studies consider the ways exhibitions reveal the memorial intentions of the curators as well as reflecting mentalities and approaches to the past intrinsic in the time of the exhibition's making. The field is quite broad but see for example: Eileen Cooper Greenhill (ed.), *Museums, Media, Message*, Routledge, London, 1995; Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne, *Thinking About Exhibitions*, Routledge, London, 1996; Gaynor Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces: Memory and the Museum*, Leicester University Press, London, 2000; Susan Crane, *Museums and Memory*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2000.

Padre Ruggero's museum celebrates the resistance as an ultimate act of sacrifice for the nation and constructs a narrative of the end of the Second World War in Northern Italy as a simple and unproblematic struggle for national liberation from the Nazis, a struggle in which the political positioning of Communist and Socialist fighters is downplayed to the advantage of an image of national unity in which the Church is seen as an active participant. The museum actively adapts traditional Catholic martyriological practices, such as preserving the garments of saints or the instruments of their punishment, to the celebration of the dead resistance fighters assisted by Padre Ruggero. Thus, the museum contains bloody bandages, a bloodied shirt of the dead men and a reproduction of the chair where the condemned men were usually tied and shot to death, as a way of sacralizing the museum space and reinforcing Padre Ruggero's own role as witness and carrier of the memory of fighters who are portrayed as 'martyrs'.

There are several images of death and dead men in Padre Ruggero's museum. Besides the reconstruction of the chair of the condemned men, which has a prominent position at the center of the room, there are two very graphic cabinets depicting scenes from the Second World War. One cabinet contains the pictures of the condemned men assisted by Padre Ruggero, together with some of their last letters as well as images of dead partisans left hanging from bridges and on the side of the road by Nazis. A second panel shows graphic images of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen and includes images of emaciated prisoners from Auschwitz and piled corpses. There seems to be a morbid relishing of these dead, like in Catholic reverence for the bodies of the saints. The Church is presented as the force, which emerged to assist the resistance fighters in prison (as is conveyed by the panels celebrating Sister Giuseppina de Muro and the Cardinal Maurilio Fossati), to assist them in their death (Padre Ruggero) or to die in their place (as conveyed by the cabinet commemorating Father Maximilian Kolbe in the panel below the photographs describing the concentration camps). All of these religious figures are linked by their connection to a prison environment and by a sense of purpose in the midst of trying times. As in the case of Lorenzo Biaciotto's story, however, this emphasis on the religious figures reduces those they are assisting to poor Christians in need of charity rather than celebrating them as martyrs as Padre Ruggero appears to wish to do, and also denies them their more specific political agency which is largely ignored.

The celebration in the museum of these religious figures who engaged in acts of charity and self-sacrifice in prison, together with the explicit celebration of S. Cafasso, a Turinese saint who assisted sixty six men who were hanged in Turin in the 19th century, all contribute indirectly to a celebration of Padre Ruggero himself as a saintly man. This 'cult' of Padre Ruggero is tended and nurtured by members of the group *Nessun Uomo E' Un'isola* whose memorial work I will discuss in the chapter on the tour. The use of the memory of Padre Ruggero's assistance to the condemned resistance fighters plays a central role in the commemorative rituals and in the tours of the prison and the Franciscan father's future as a saintly figure increases the value of the prison as a site worth preserving.

In the introduction to *Padre Ruggero: vocazione religiosa e carcere*, Professor Valerio Morello says that as historical collaborator to the 'Congregation for the Causes of the Saints' he is usually opposed to the literature that describes saints through a long list of anecdotes that cannot be proven to be connected to the saint in question. He writes that 'a quite different result is obtained, however, when the facts reported are told directly by the protagonist and are perhaps supported by a photographic documentation; in this case the character becomes, through his direct memory, most precise and real.' Morello's passage indirectly suggests that Padre Ruggero is already on the path to be supported as a Saintly cause and thus the work of Secondo Ercole is somehow anticipating the work normally done only after a saint is dead.

Strikingly, the museum almost completely ignores the 246 Jews who were sent to concentration camps from Turin, an unknown number of which were first gathered in Le Nuove between the 30 of November of 1943 and the 31 of January of 1944.³³⁴ There are photographs of inmates at Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen but there is no mention of their Jewishness and the only explicit reference to the extermination of the Jews was added in the late 1990s when a Jewish survivor donated the Auschwitz uniform he came home with, which he stole from a dead Communist prisoner. This silence on the Jewish question is a reflection of the Catholic interpretation of the Holocaust in the first two decades after the war, which tended (ironically similarly to the official position of countries in the Communist block) to

³³⁴ See *Torino 1938/45 una guida per la memoria*. Città di Torino, Istituto Piemontese per la Storia della Resistenza e della Società Contemporanea, Turin, 2000, on-line version <http://www.istoreto.it/torino38-45/deportazione.htm> (visited 25 October 2005).

emphasize the anti-Fascist struggle against the Nazi forces of evil but downplayed the deeply anti-Semitic nature of the Holocaust. The museum's special dedication of a glass cabinet to Father Maximilian Kolbe, a Franciscan priest who gave up his life to replace another prisoner who was married and had children, is a case in point since it transforms Auschwitz, perhaps the strongest symbol of the destruction of the Jews during the war, into a site of Catholic martyrdom, much to the distaste of the international Jewish community.³³⁵

The silence present in the museum over the destruction of the Jewish people and their passage through Le Nuove is matched by a more complex use of the Holocaust by the group *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola*. During the tours, in fact, the group mention the deportation and extermination of Jews within the context of their discussion of political deportation to which they give precedence, also in an effort at celebrating the saintly deeds of Padre Ruggero. It may be that this emphasis on the Catholic side of the prison's Second World War history is derived from the absence of Jewish volunteers to the organization. At the same time this lack of participation may be due to the very Catholic bend of the commemorations taking place in the building or more likely to a difference in tradition, as Emma Klein discussed in relation to the controversy over the presence of the Carmelite convent and its crosses on the grounds of Auschwitz. Jewish tradition requires a very different relationship towards a site of suffering and destruction than the ways Catholics approach such sites, one which does not embrace representation and public celebration but rather calls for silence. Emma Klein writes: 'How were Catholics to know that in contrast to their own need to venerate and make sacred a site of martyrdom, Jewish tradition deems it fit to shun such a spot and leave it desolate?'³³⁶ If this is clearly the case for Auschwitz, which, as Roland Modras has pointed out has become 'a sacred symbol and a holy place, not in the sense of ennobling and uplifting but in the biblical sense of *kadosh*, beyond the ordinary, fearsome, capable of evoking shuddering and

³³⁵ See Emma Klein, *The Battle for Auschwitz. Catholic-Jewish Relations Under Strain*, Vallentine Mitchell, London, 2001. See also Carol Rittner and John Roth (eds.), *Memory Offended-The Auschwitz Convent Controversy*, Praeger, Westport Connecticut, 1991 beginning chronology. Some of Father Kolbe's writings were considered anti-Semitic and this caused an uproar when he was canonized by the Pope on October 10, 1982.

³³⁶ Emma Klein, *ibid.* pp.4-5.

awe',³³⁷ it is all the more so for Le Nuove, which represented only one of the first steps in the much bigger and horrific experience of deportation.

Only 21 of the 246 Jews deported from Turin ever returned and most of the survivors, like the writer Primo Levi, probably transited directly from the train station Porta Nuova in Turin (without being held in Le Nuove) to the camps in Fossoli or Bolzano.³³⁸ These two camps were used as the main gathering points for Jews and others in Italy starting respectively in January and August 1944.³³⁹ Primo Levi himself noted in the very beginning of his book *If This is a Man*, that: 'For my good fortune, I was deported to Auschwitz only in 1944, i.e. after the German government, given the growing lack of labour, had decided to lengthen the average life of the prisoners to be eliminated, allowing tangible improvements in the quality of life and temporarily suspending the arbitrary killings of individuals'.³⁴⁰ It is thus a tragic fact of deportation that there are no voices of Jewish survivors who were held in Le Nuove before January 1944, since the regime they found on their journey and in the camps was designed purely for their murder.

The absence of a Jewish voice in this project, just as in the prison as it stands in its empty form today, is a result of the destruction of the Jewish prisoners during the war, though there are other cases in which Jewish community activists have played an important role in shaping sites of memory in Italy.³⁴¹ It was particularly difficult for me to go about conducting interviews on the topic of the Holocaust in relation to Le Nuove. It was easy to approach Resistance Fighters and to ask them to talk about their experience of arrest and incarceration because this was a key event in their lives which reflected a *choice* of political action and which framed them as heroically challenging an 'evil' regime, and because their arrest was usually limited to themselves or their siblings. When it came to seeking out Jewish prisoners,

³³⁷ Roland Modras, 'Jews and Poles: Remembering at a cemetery', *Memory Offended- The Auschwitz Convent Controversy*, Carol Rittner and John Roth (eds.), Praeger, Westport Connecticut, 1991, pp.53-61, p. 54.

³³⁸ See: Costantino di Sante (ed.), *I campi di concentramento in Italia: dall'internamento alla deportazione*, Franco Angeli, Milan, 2001.

³³⁹ Torino 1938/45 una guida per la memoria, web version <http://www.istoreto.it/torino38-45/deportazione.htm> (visited 21 October 2005)

³⁴⁰ Primo Levi, 'Preface to the 1947 edition', *Se Questo E' Un'Uomo, Opere*, vol.1, Einaudi, Turin, 1987, p.3.

³⁴¹ A Jewish voice was heard quite strongly, for example, in relation to commemorations at the Fosse Ardeatine where the rabbi and the priest prayed together from the very early commemorations. Adreotti was said to have noted in 1964 that the commemorations at the Fosse Ardeatine were the only 'official event where the Catholic priest and the rabbi of the Israelite community recited together words of suffrage' cited in Alessandro Portelli, *L'ordine è già stato eseguito. Roma, Fosse Ardeatine, La Memoria*, Donzelli, Roma, 2001, p.334.

survivors, or the families of those who did not return, matters became much more delicate. I felt that seeking out Jewish prisoners because of their Jewishness and asking them questions about a horrific experience, forced upon them and their families simply as a function of their defined 'race' was somehow a violence, which would reproduce the categories by which their plight began. I was also uncomfortable with the idea of trying to find survivors to interview about their experience in Le Nuove, asking them questions for a project that ignored what to them was the much more historically relevant and traumatic experience of deportation and the camps. I therefore avoided these painful interviews and thus also contributed to the continued silence on the topic. More research on the incarceration of Jews in Turin especially in the period before 1944 is much needed though also extremely difficult since the prison archive from that time was destroyed in a bombing and since so few Jews sent out in the early convoys returned from the camps.³⁴²

Le Nuove has been visited on several occasions by the head Rabbi of the Turin Synagogue, who has prayed for the victims of the Nazis and the Fascists at Padre Ruggero's side. On these occasions, however, the Rabbi appeared almost as Padre Ruggero's guest, a visitor to a site of memory rather than an active maker of that memory since the Jewish experience in Le Nuove has to contend with the much more vocal representation of the Christian 'martyrs' of the Resistance and with the dominant figure of Padre Ruggero Cipolla.³⁴³

³⁴² For a historical reconstruction of Italian Jewish deportation see Liliana Picciotto Fargion, *Il libro della memoria. Gli Ebrei deportati dall'Italia 1943-45*, Mursia, Milan, 1991; see also her earlier article 'La deportazione degli ebrei dall'Italia' in *Spostamenti di popolazione e deportazione in europa 1939-1945*, Nuova Universale Cappelli, Bologna, 1987. For information on the application of the racial laws in Turin in particular see Fabio Levi, *L'ebreo in oggetto. L'applicazione della normative antiebraica a Torino, 1938-43*, Zamorani, Turin, 1991 or *Le case e le cose. La persecuzione degli ebrei torinesi nelle carte dell'Egeli 1938-45*, Compagnia S. Paolo, Turin, 1998.

³⁴³ This is something which was also observed by Alessandro Portelli. He writes that in the pamphlets and the celebrations of the 1950s and 1960s' at the Fosse Ardeatine 'it always seems that the Catholic ritual has a general value and that the Jewish one is a particular case, whose relevance is limited to those of the same religion. One of Portelli's oral sources noted how quick the Jewish Kaddish was compared to the long mass of the priest who would take over a much larger time and space during the commemorations. Alessandro Portelli, *L'ordine è già stato eseguito*, ibid. p.335.

NUNS



Fig.26 -Sister Giuseppina de Muro³⁴⁴

Nuns played a central role in the female section of the prison until the mid 1980s when they were replaced entirely by trained female staff. This section will examine the memories of nuns presented by inmates and guards, as a further way of assessing the role of the church in prison and the traces it has left now that the prison is closed down. The section will also focus in particular on the figure of Sister Giuseppina de Muro, a nun who received a gold medal for her work during the Second World War, and whose authority and fame in the female section of the prison was comparable to that of Padre Ruggero in the male section.

Before I go any further we should note that a serious study of the perception and role of nuns in Italian institutions is missing and would have been very useful to this discussion.³⁴⁵ Historically nuns were an important presence in hospitals, mental

³⁴⁴ Photo courtesy of Angelo Toppino.

³⁴⁵ There have been studies focusing on the role of nuns in Italy in the 16th century: Karen Lowe, *Nuns Chronicles and Convent Culture in Renaissance and Counter Reformation Italy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003 and in specific contexts and localities: Colleen Reardon, *Holy Concord Within Sacred Walls: Nuns and Music in Siena 1575-1700*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002. A more general cultural study on the figure of nuns in Italy has still to be written and 'nun

institutions and schools and their special role as religious women allowed them to gain a status and professional experience otherwise rarely accessible to Italian women before the twentieth century. It was perhaps this very status by which nuns subverted traditional gender roles, with their celibacy framing them in the pitiful category of spinsters, which also accounted for some negative stereotyping and common popular scorn or sense of pity often expressed by the public. Such collective feelings towards nuns in general ought to be kept in mind when considering memories and depictions of nuns in *Le Nuove* and these should also be seen in contrast to popular understandings of priests which were overall more positive.³⁴⁶

If we look at one of the glass cabinets in Padre Ruggero's museum containing photographs from the 1950s there is an image from the female section of the prison that visually captures some of the complicated dynamics of power and affection embedded in the presence of nuns in the prison. It is an image of the nursery in the prison where a young inmate mother is kneeling down to her little girl in a crib, watching her. The girl is not looking at her mother but her attention, a mix of excitement and fear, is directed at a nun that is hovering over her with an easter egg, standing in a white starched hat whose image is repeated in a background mirror. The photograph captures a tension between power and intimacy (conveyed by the nun's higher position and her intromission in the scene of love and play between a mother and daughter, as well as by the expression of confused excitement and intimidation on the little girl's face) which seems to have been at the very core of the behavioral dynamic between inmates and nuns in prison. The nun is being affectionate towards the little girl by giving her the chocolate egg, but she is also exerting her right to the child and her supervisory role as an authority figure over her mother.

history' in general remains a neglected topic. This was the subject of the lecture by Olwen Hufton as part of the Hayes Robinson Lecture Series #3 (2000) held at Royal Holloway College on 2 March 1999 entitled 'Whatever happened to the history of the nun?'.
³⁴⁶ Of course in Italy anti-priest sentiment was also very strong, especially in the areas formerly under Papal rule, and in industrial areas like Turin with a strong Socialist and then Communist tradition. There nevertheless seems to be a significant difference in status between priests and nuns even in the eyes of 'mangiapreti'-literally priest eaters, anti-clericals.



Fig.27 -Sister Giuseppina de Muro with mother and child in the prison nursery

A passage taken from an article, which appeared in the prison publication *Dalle Nuove*, in June 1960 describes the official perception of nuns in the prison and of their work with the children of female inmates. It reads as follows:

In the prison there is a happy corner, where some little guests live blissfully, ignoring the sad reality that surrounds them. It's the 'nido' (literally nest)-the nursery- that the Mother Superior of the Women's section, Sister Giuseppina, has set up for the children of female inmates and which she has tended to for many years with extreme devotion: a perfumed lily that shines its whiteness in a wilderness of thorns, a patch of blue sky that breaks through the smoky darkness of so many miseries. "Mommy superior": that's how the children call Sister Giuseppina. They are chirpy voices, and cheerful ones that bounce in the air in a lively way, like the chirping of sparrows in springtime. The good season has come back and the small kids spend their days in the graceful little garden, tended like the garden of elegant villas; they are flowers among flowers that move on their little unstable legs, as if rocked by a mountain breeze.

Sister Giuseppina observes them, as eager as a mother: she lifts one or the other in her arms, cuddles them. Who cares if an insurmountable wall separates this corner of paradise from the rest of the world? The children don't know it: they live happily, they run among the flower beds, they pick a flower and laughingly cry out: "for you Mommy superior! "

The language used to describe Sister Giuseppina in this context is quite similar to that used to describe her care of inmates during the war, in particular the metaphor of

the lily 'shining in its whiteness against the smoky darkness of so many miseries', which is also evocative of the Virgin Mary (whose symbol is the lily) as she is evoked and described in prayer. This passage is striking for the absence of the children's mothers who have been replaced by the institutional 'mommy superior' and for the unproblematic way in which this replacement seems to be emphasized in positive terms. The pain and frustration felt by the mothers kept behind bars while their children were left to be cared for by the nuns, or the confusion the small children must have felt are completely ignored in this passage

Susanna Ronconi captures the ambiguity and tension produced by the nun's familiar behavior in her own very critical assessment of nuns' roles in prison. She said:

The nuns in prison always played the role of those who set themselves up against the more militaristic aspect (of prison) but it isn't true, if you talk to the inmates who were in prison in Perugia they were the colonels. But it depends on the situation (...) their relations to the women were relations really of those who are going to cure an illness of the soul, with the whole disturbing aspect contained in this, which is not exerting power, it's exerting another power, invasive, terrible, subtle, invisible, eh?!!!

Ronconi highlights a key feature of the church in prison which sets itself up as a benevolent force, alternative to the more brutal or, as she says, militaristic authority in prison but which nevertheless detains a clear power, one which by its subtlety and invisibility is perhaps even more invasive than the normal institutional power felt in prison. The moral/spiritual nature of the nuns' power over inmates is corroborated by their role as practical providers, which, according to Ronconi and others, the nuns played on quite often as a way of reaching inmates.

Nuns framed themselves as more benevolent than guards by publicly breaking prison rules, especially to provide comfort goods to inmates. This breaking of the rules occurred while prison authorities turned a blind eye, and it was never an infringement of too serious a nature although during the Second World War the nuns did indeed take some actions which could have cost them their lives. By one account, for example, the nuns managed to smuggle out a two-year old boy, Massimo Foa, who had been born by a Jewish woman in prison. The nuns hid him

in the laundry and arranged for the toddler to be taken into safety by foster parents.³⁴⁷

NUNS DURING THE WAR

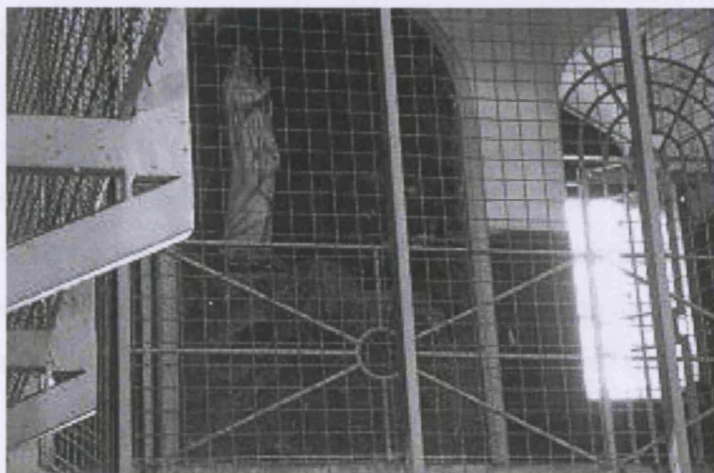


Fig.28 –Statue of the Virgin Mary behind bars in the female section of the prison just above the entrance to the corridor leading to the ‘German Wing’.

The nuns had access to spaces that were not available to inmates and during the war they could negotiate with the German soldiers, and on rare occasions managed to enter the German wing, which was the most forbidden part of the prison between 1943 and 1945. This ability to negotiate with the highest prison authorities, which on one hand also consisted of trust and collaboration between the nuns and Nazi soldiers, was precisely what allowed the nuns to act and appear benevolent towards inmates.

Padre Ruggero recalled an episode in which Sister Giuseppina was able to bring goods into the German wing of the prison:

Later it happened that a truckload of fruit arrived in the prison sent by the partisans. We should say that in a corner of the internal garden some pigs were being raised so the nun turned to the German in charge and put it like this: ‘you wouldn’t know what happened to me! they sent me a truckload of fruit for the pigs but it’s good quality stuff and I don’t feel like I can, in conscience, give it to the pigs. If you will allow me I would like to distribute it to the inmates in the first wing’. She got permission under condition that she alone, helped by some sisters, be allowed to go near the cells to deliver the fruit. Sister Giuseppina took advantage of the situation to make an important gesture towards Monsenior Barale- the secretary of the Cardinal

³⁴⁷ Article by Sarah Strippoli, ‘Suor Giuseppina che salvò un bambino alle Nuove’, *La Repubblica*, 23 March 2002 cited by Secondo Ercole in *Padre Ruggero Ieri e Oggi*, p. 74.

Archbishop Fossati- who was held in isolation in that wing. While she was distributing the fruit she arranged to get a wine goblet, wine and everything necessary for him to serve a mass (...) After the war Monsenior Barale said that that day he celebrated the most beautiful mass of his life.³⁴⁸

The nun here was able to engage in resistant activities while still not entirely breaking prison rules and having permission from the Germans who were working with her in the prison. While the incident implies a high level of generosity on the part of the nun, and a sense that the fruit was probably most welcome by those prisoners who were living under extremely harsh conditions, it is interesting that Padre Ruggero makes no mention of the inmates or their conditions (many of them were probably badly wounded, swollen, beaten) but rather focuses on Monsenior Barale and his unique chance to serve mass, under those strange and awful circumstances.

In her report on her visit to the German wing, however, Sister Giuseppina emphasized the shock she felt upon seeing the conditions of the men who were held there:

The first time that I go in there a long line of men is aligned in the corridor, their foreheads against the wall, hands behind their backs. They are waiting for the meticulous and heartless inspection of the Germans, I am told, for hours and hours. I hide my deep distress and I make my report to the Marshall.(...)With great consolation derived from being allowed to be instruments of Providence, we had the pain of witnessing miseries and sufferings that we had never encountered or even imagined, in our long life among inmates. In the distributions the cells would open showing us their infinite misery and giving us a sense of the most urgent needs: the unhappy ones were piled in filth and mud up to ten in each cell; the single rough spoon went from mouth to mouth, they received their soup in the same bowls that are used for the summary ablutions...³⁴⁹

Again a serious study of nuns and their activities would have to incorporate a section on hygiene and its special significance in nuns' service. Sister Giuseppina felt deep pity for the men who were held in the German section more than for the very frightening destiny as deportees or for their possible executions, for the conditions of filth in which they were forced to live. Many of the activities of Sister Giuseppina and her fellow nuns were aimed at improving hygiene conditions, at

³⁴⁸ Secondo Ercole, *Testimonianze di Padre Ruggero. Carcere e Resistenza*, Alzani, Pinerolo (TO), 2003, p.9.

³⁴⁹ Suor Giuseppina de Muro, *Relazione a sua eminenza reverendissima il cardinale Maurilio Fossati sulla attività svolta nelle carceri giudiziarie di Torino dalle figlie della carità*, Turin, 22 February, 1946. From the archive of Padre Ruggero Cipolla, Convento di S. Bernardino da Siena, Saluzzo.

setting up a clean clinic where partisan wounds could be tended away from insects and filth, as well as providing material improvements to both men and women before they were sent off.

Nuns also broke prison rules by providing spaces for hidden socializations, and for rare moments of solitude for inmates. Marisa Scala, recalls that the nuns would slip her into the church and allow her to play the harmonium as a way of relaxing.

The nun allowed me, since I couldn't leave my cell, I couldn't see anybody, I couldn't talk to anyone, I couldn't receive any letters...around five/five-thirty when she thought that the Germans were calm and quiet she would let me out. Downstairs there was an office with a harmonium³⁵⁰ (this was in an antechamber of the church) and she knew that I played the piano...

It was then that Marisa met the 'famous Rosa Vercesi'. Rosa Vercesi was a lesbian woman who, during Fascist times, was sentenced for life for having killed her lover.³⁵¹ As Marisa told me:

They found her friend dead and they accused her, there was an intrigue involving money, then during Fascist times to be a lesbian was really a scary thing(...)and I met her the first time that I was playing, since the nun let me play the harmonium, she gave me a piece of mirror and as she handed it to me I even cut myself, I didn't have anything, it was the my first days there and I was terrified I didn't dare to ask the nuns and she gave me a small piece of mirror and a comb and I asked her, but 'who are you?' 'I am Rosa Vercesi and in here I have to die'.

Rosa Vercesi, a figure from a different sort of past, condemned to wander for the rest of her life in prison spaces, was given special roaming privileges by the nuns who probably took pity on her; she appeared like a ghost to Marisa who was also somehow comforted by that encounter. The church provided a safe background for this exchange to occur, one which was at once eerie and full of solidarity.³⁵²

³⁵⁰ A pedal-activated keyboard instrument similar to an organ.

³⁵¹ Rosa Vercesi's was the first murder trial to take place in Turin under Fascism. Apparently Rosa Vercesi had taken cocaine and killed her lover, Vittoria Nicolotti, in a psychotic crisis. The Fascist authorities covered up the real motive for the crime because this was considered far too scandalous. For more on Rosa Vercesi see Guido Ceronetti, *La vera storia di Rosa Vercesi e della sua amica Vittoria*, Einaudi, Turin, 2000.

³⁵² The story of Rosa Vercesi, as the only homosexual discussed by any of my informants, evokes another silence in the commemorations of the deportations during the war, that of the imprisonment of homosexuals under fascism. There is absolutely no mention of Fascist discrimination against homosexuals in any of the tours. It is impossible to retrace the presence of men or women imprisoned for their homosexuality during Fascism based on the archive because most prisoner files were

Besides these sorts of kindnesses and special privileges, material goods played a key role in Marisa Scala's positive assessment of the nuns and their role in prison. She said:

In the meantime the mother superior always gave me a bit of coffee, they would come talk to me a bit and once, for example, the superior had them open my cell, I peeked out and there was the superior with a basket of eggs and she told me: 'I got permission to go to the German wing and to bring some eggs. I am going to give Remo two'. I found out later why, he told me then at the end because he had been tortured, beaten etc. something which I didn't know and then in the death cell 'I will give Remo two' For me was something...(silence).

Sister Giuseppina's gesture towards Marisa's tortured brother still moves her today, bringing Marisa to silence and close to tears.

Marisa Scala reported that when she was being transported towards the assembly camp in Bolzano before being sent to the female camp of Ravensbrück, the nun from Le Nuove had filled her pockets with goods sent over by Marisa's partisan friends. 'She had filled my pockets with gold coins, a small bottle of cologne, my pockets were full of things'. She later gave some of those things to the men who were on the convoy with her: 'I had my jacket full of things and I gave some to Vasari (...) and some to Magini and some things I kept for myself. In Germany that meant your life, the gold lapels that they kept in their mouth and they exchanged with the Poles, with the Germans, it meant a bit of survival'. Those material goods, which the nun was passing on, provided by volunteers on the outside and by the CLN³⁵³ were extremely precious in that war context, and nuns were able to distribute hundreds of these goods, secretly donated to the prison especially after 8 of September 1943.

While Sister Giuseppina was very willing to help Marisa Scala and apparently even sent messages on her behalf to her family and friends giving news of her health, she was very ungenerous towards Anna Cherchi who has an opposite view of the nun from that presented by Marisa Scala; the two women provide accounts which present

destroyed in a bomb in 1944. The taboo surrounding homosexuality in the first part of the Twentieth Century, and in many environments still today, makes finding potential witnesses extremely difficult. Documentary film-maker Gabriella Romano did manage to produce a documentary about female homosexuality during fascism *L'Altro Ieri* (Italy, 2001) in which she interviewed women who were arrested during the regime. More research on the topic is certainly needed.

³⁵³ Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale-Committee for National Liberation, the umbrella organization comprising various partisan groups involved in the struggle against the allied Nazi and Fascist forces.

a divided memory of the powerful nun. Anna Cherchi said: 'The nuns were all good, there was Sister Maria, Sister Giuseppina was the one in charge eh... when she died they carried her in triumph because they say that she helped...at the end she helped a lot. I have a bad memory of Sister Giuseppina in fact when she died I didn't go to the funeral because I didn't accept what she did to me'. Here Anna Cherchi begins by presenting a common notion of the role of the nuns in prison during the war and then goes on, in the passage I report below, to describe her own very different experience. She starts by saying that the nuns were all good, and emphasizing that people say that Sister Giuseppina helped a lot. She adds 'in the end' as if to suggest that during the early stages of the war she did not help at all. Anna then quickly shifts into her own version of Sister Giuseppina, which is not positive at all. Her apparent need to begin by introducing the nuns in positive terms shows the extent to which a positive myth of the nuns and their heroic 'goodness' during the war must have been circulating among Anna Cherchi's peers or simply in the media.

Anna Cherchi recalled that a common criminal woman who came from the Asti province like herself was about to be released from prison and had asked if she wanted Anna to send some news to her mother. The woman suggested that once out she could go see Anna's mother to report to her. Anna recalled:

And what did I do? I wrote the address, just my mother's address and the day after when we went out for air time I gave it to her, I said 'here look, here's the address, you go and tell her whatever you want. You think about what you should tell her.' So then she took the note and knowing that before going out they always *ran them through the sewage*³⁵⁴ what did she do? She unsewed a piece of the lining in her coat and she put the note there, then she sewed it back...the mother superior runs her through the sewage and she finds the little note(...) And what did she do? she took that note and gave it to Captain Schmidt!

Captain Schmidt was the SS officer who had been in charge of Anna's interrogations. He could easily have used the note to track down Anna's mother and to intimidate her, or he could perhaps have assumed that the address in question had something to do with partisan activities. Fortunately the captain simply tore the note and said never to do it again. Anna said 'in that case Captain Schmidt was more humane than Sister Giuseppina!'

After the war Anna went back to the prison to collect some papers. She said:

³⁵⁴ Prison expression: searched them very thoroughly.

Sister Giuseppina as soon as she sees me she says ‘oh *figliola*³⁵⁵!’ and comes towards me. I let her come up to a meter from me and then I said ‘mother’- no, I didn’t call her mother- I said ‘nun! stop don’t come forward because what you did to me is too serious and I was never able to digest it’ ‘but you know *figliola* I was caught between a rock and a hard place’³⁵⁶ (...) ‘well you should have done what Captain Schmidt did (...) he tore it and told me never to do it again and you should have done the same- all the more so you should have done that. So she had in her pocket you know those mints that are white and big, she had a packet (back then you would buy them loose) she pulled out that packet and wanted to give me...I said ‘no thank you, it would get stuck in my neck’.³⁵⁷

This exchange is particularly rich for our discussion of dynamics between nuns and inmates. First of all the portrayal of the nun is of one who was not only doing her expected job of searching inmates but went beyond her duties and potentially threatened Anna or her mother’s life by her zeal towards her task. The episode sees the nun explicitly justifying herself for her collaboration on the grounds that she was caught between a rock and a hard place and had no choice, something that Anna immediately questions. As a final effort at pacifying Anna the nun offers her a mint, the type of gesture a parent or a grandparent would make towards a child, but also a gesture, which nuns in prison are used to repeating as a sign of benevolence towards their ‘figliole’. Just as when Anna refused to use the term ‘mother’ but rather called Sister Giuseppina ‘suora’ she now refused the sweet on grounds that it would stay ‘in her neck’, and suffocate her. Powerfully the image of the mint sweet stuck in Anna’s throat echoes her statement that ‘she did not digest’ what the nun did to her, and to her death, would never forgive her.

Another incident which Anna Cherchi reports in which Sister Giuseppina acted less than charitably towards her had to do with a gold stopwatch that Anna had been given by a fellow partisan who had probably taken it from a fallen enemy. Anna Cherchi had told Sister Giuseppina, on the day that she was to be sent to Germany:

‘Listen, I am leaving and I have this watch, I leave it with you, if I come back I will come get it, if I don’t come back you do what you want with it, sell it and use the money, give it away, do what you want

³⁵⁵ A diminutive of daughter, with slightly patronizing and old fashion connotations.

³⁵⁶ In Italian ‘tra l’incudine e il martello’.

³⁵⁷ She uses the word ‘collo’ for neck, not ‘gola’ throat which would be a more natural word, collo is perhaps a harder word which helps give a sense of angry emphasis.

with it'. She didn't take it! she didn't take it! She said 'I don't want to dirty myself' she said to me, and I took it with me and it ended up as it ended up, and we didn't know that we would end up in a place like that, we had never heard of an extermination camp. In Ravensbrück, the only female camp. That's it.

In Anna's story the nun's refusal to hold on to the watch placed her in a position of power looking down on Anna, refusing a quite simple favor. That the watch and Anna both ended up in a concentration camp reverses that power dynamic and is a kind of vindication on Anna's part towards the nun who did not want to 'dirty herself'.

After the war the many times that Sister Giuseppina helped Jews and anti-Fascists contributed to her image as a 'resistance nun' who was always brave and self-sacrificing. Anna Cherchi's story complicates that myth although she herself pays tribute to it and suggests that a more positive view of the nun might emerge because of help she provided towards the end of the war, together with Padre Ruggero. The main incident, which consigns Sister Giuseppina to heroic fame, however, is the story of her crossing the city on the trunk of a car waving a white flag and wearing a Red Cross armband in order to secure permission by the Fascist prefect to free all the political prisoners in Le Nuove. This episode is referred to in tours conducted in the prison and it is commemorated by a drawing and by a framed armband which hangs in the entrance to the prison chapel.

After the fall of the Republic of Salò and the liberation of Northern Italy from the Nazis on April 25 1945, the situation in Turin remained tense for several days. The liberating partisan forces were slow to arrive from the countryside and the mountains and there were still many armed groups of Fascists and Germans huddled up in buildings engaged in violent shootings with Turinese partisan forces. In Le Nuove by April 27 the situation had become particularly tense because a group of partisans had taken control of the Westinghouse factory just across from the prison and had started shooting against the armed guards on the turrets in an effort at beginning the liberation of their companions in the prison. Both political and common inmates were at once excited and terrified by the developments and impatient to be set free as they soon expected. SS and Fascist forces were still in the prison, however, and the nuns and prison authorities were worried that they might start a massacre in retaliation for their impending doom or that they would try to

take some of the most important political prisoners hostage for their own protection. Sister Giuseppina noted in her report to the Cardinal, which she compiled in 1946:

There no longer existed any efficient Authority. The Fascist ones were getting dismantled, the German ones thought about their own problems and the Committee of National Liberation had not yet asserted its command. Chaos instead was beginning to make itself felt, with all the terrible consequences for the city. Telephone communications were interrupted! The circulation of vehicles was forbidden. The population was closed up in the houses in fear; armed partisan bands were operating here and there amongst the neighborhoods. The uninterrupted rattle of the machine guns and the shooting of the cannon from the various parts of the city were like the foreboding thunder anticipating the storm that is about to unravel.

In the absence of clear orders it was difficult to assess what should be done in the prison. Clearly the partisan prisoners could not be kept there together with the Nazi and Salò forces and convincing the black shirts to allow these prisoners to go free was not an easy task. To get a written order from the Fascist prefect commanding them to withdraw and allow the political prisoners to go free was absolutely essential. And that is when Sister Giuseppina's rush through the city on the trunk of the car occurred and became legend.

The interesting aspect of the legend is not so much that it highlights the nun's heroism as that it reduces the very messy reality of the liberation of the prison to a single image which is easily graspable and which makes the nun the single central active figure in easing the tensions in Le Nuove. The image is evocative of Red Cross workers in many previous conflicts from Crimea to the First World War and it is visually appealing to envisage a nun in her white starched hat sitting on a black and shining FIAT car waving a white flag amongst the smoke and bullets in a burning city. The image powerfully bleaches over some of the darker aspects of the liberation, which Padre Ruggero reported only in passing, when he talked about getting angry at some partisans for not allowing him to assist some Fascist prisoners before they were dragged outside of Le Nuove and shot against the walls of the prison.



Fig.29 -Drawing of Sister Giuseppina on the Fiat car by Michele Privileggi held in the prison museum. Photo courtesy of Padre Ruggero Cipolla.

CONCLUSION

This chapter began with a visit to the prison chapel and with a brief description of the penal theories behind the strange architecture of the old cubicle chapel. It discusses some of the changes which occurred in the chapel over time as well as the few traces such as graffiti, left in the prison chapel as traces of past lives and of previous impressions of the church space. The chapter then moves on to the figure of Padre Ruggero Cipolla. It examines how he is perceived and remembered by prison workers and prisoners as well as how his role in the prison, though usually benevolent, also made him complicit in some of the violence perpetrated against prisoners. The chapter considers the ways Padre Ruggero's memories of the Second World War and his particular version of Le Nuove's past have come to dominate the memorial discourses surrounding the old prison. The chapter shows how Padre Ruggero's memories of assisting resistance fighters, which may be read as manifestations of the old priest's belated post-traumatic stress, link up to a strong martyriological tradition around which the organization Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola builds its argument for Le Nuove being hallowed ground, further discussed in the

Tour chapter. The section then considers the relative silence surrounding the deportation of Jewish prisoners to concentration camps from Le Nuove and considers the reasons for these silences which can be attributed to the absence of Jewish volunteers in the organization *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola*, to the particularities of deportation in Turin, and to the priority given by the organization to Padre Ruggero's voice and memories. The chapter ends with a discussion of the role of Nuns, the other side of the church's presence in the prison, and focuses in particular on the figure of Sister Giuseppina de Muro, a nun who was in charge of the female section of the prison during the Second World War. The section draws out and complicates the myth of the nun as a 'resistance nun' and shows how different female prisoners contribute to or contest that myth.

These sections were meant to convey a sense of the role of the Church in Le Nuove over time and in particular at the time considered most vital by church members themselves, the Second World War. The repeated portrayal of the war and the almost exaggerated celebration of its protagonists as heroic figures may also suggest an attempt at silencing the most disturbing and uncomfortable memories of the church's silent assistance to the Nazi and Fascist authorities or of its continued role as an element of discipline and punishment in the prison.

THE TOUR

CHAPTER SIX



intelligence scores and so forth.

When the cells are all unlocked, the inmates and roughly dressed guards enter the mess hall for a lot of all right food, and afterwards so that they can be registered with the industry, a last round of the mess hall, via the registration table, and so on. In the place in the prison, it is the first time of the first left when the guard is down the two will leave their gear behind a large glass partition which will be outside the first night border between, guards and inmates, which have to get through in order to enter the prison. There are several metal lockers behind and with numbers on them, where guards would have to store their weapons, under lock and

THE TOUR

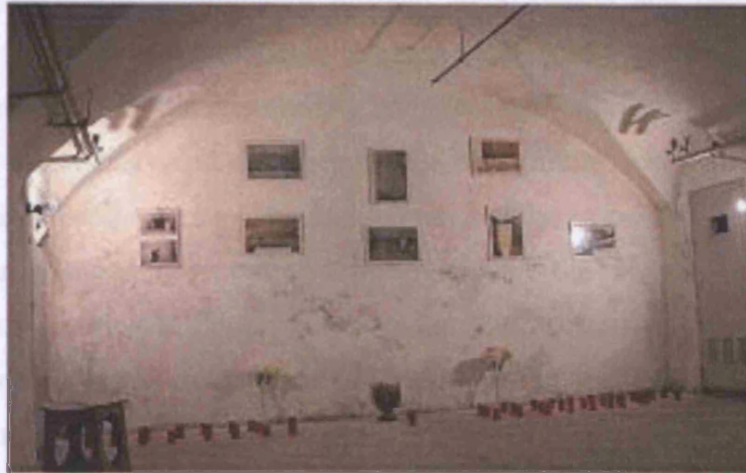


Fig.30 -Shrine to the partisans executed at the Martinetto, in the underground cells. Le Nuove 2003.

It's a grey morning and the school children are late. Orazio Toscano is always a bit early and he waits at the corner, pulling his sleeves over his hands to keep them warm. A few minutes later the kids arrive, all carrying backpacks loaded as if for a weekend of partisan warfare in the mountains. But none of these kids have real war in their heads, though Orazio hopes to put some traces of his war in there. He was roughly their age when the Second World War ended and it is his hope that they will learn something. But he is getting tired of it all and he confesses to me in private that most of the kids don't seem to get it, that they lack respect for the place, that he wishes their teachers would spend more time preparing them for the visit. Their indifference scares and wounds him.

When the kids are all gathered and counted and roughly silenced Orazio asks the teachers for a list of all their names and addresses so that they can be registered with the ministry- a last remnant of the stringent visitor registration rules that used to be in place in the prison. A guard, one of the few left after the prison was closed down (he too will leave soon) goes behind a large glass partition which used to constitute the first main barrier prisoners, guards, and visitors, would have to get through in order to enter the prison. There are rusted metal lockers behind him with numbers on them, where guards would have to store their weapons under lock and

²²⁸ See already above paragraph Chapter Three

key, before entering the cell area of the prison.³⁵⁸ People used to wait in long lines here, supervised closely by young men bearing muskets and later machine guns.

The guard slowly rummages through some papers and places the list of students in a folder, briefly pretending to check each of their names. This procedure is a ritual formality since there is nothing left to contain or protect, besides the prison museum and a few rusty and damaged pieces of furniture, other than the building itself. The guard then presses a large blue button and the automatic door opens with a rusty clamour, a noise drawn out and deafening, like the noise of a dentist's drill. While it means nothing to the school children, that noise may have sent shudders down the spine of guards and prisoners returning to Le Nuove and of those entering for the first time.

We all enter. The children start running up and down the courtyard and Orazio moves to the marble stone with the names of the prison guards who died in service carved into it. He stands silently waiting for the classes to gather around him and then he begins his story. He tells the kids about the founding of the prison, about the system of solitary confinement and how this is a place of suffering where hundreds of political prisoners were kept before being executed or sent to concentration camps. 'It was not only the prisoners who suffered inside these walls' he says 'for many prison guards it was as though they too were confined here and some lost their lives in service. You can read their names on this stone. In particular Cotugno and Lorusso died at the hands of terrorists while dutifully serving their country'. I wonder how many of the children gathered there know about the phenomenon of terrorism in the 1970s in Italy, or whether Orazio's words make them think of Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda; their teachers don't seem too interested in explaining things to them.

We all move to the female section of the prison, which was abandoned only a couple of weeks earlier. There is still bedding on some of the cots and the wreckage of rooms left in haste: empty bottles, dirty old clothes, boxes and papers left on the floor. The female section of the prison still has the 'ballatoi', the balcony structure that used to characterize the entire prison before the riots of '69 and '71 forced a restructuring. The female section really looks like a funnel as Susanna Ronconi described it, and it is hard not to think of some of the classic drawings of the circles

³⁵⁸ See glossy image partitioning Chapter Three.

of hell. Except for the buzzing voices of the school children looking up in wonderment, the wing is silent. No faces peer down from up high, no slamming doors and booming radios give us that sense of heightened, rotting humanity, of the market square and the asylum that so many described- the space is dead. A statue of the Virgin Mary behind bars holds its white hands up high as if praying for us, or for somebody to come and let her out. She is the last remaining 'inhabitant' of this wing.

Orazio continues with the scripted tour he knows by heart. He tells the children about Sister Giuseppina De Muro and her role in the liberation. We all move closer to him as he tells us about the German wing of the prison and how nobody was allowed inside there, how prisoners had no access to the outside world and were often taken out of the prison and interrogated, and badly beaten before being either sent to the execution squad or off to labour and concentration camps in Germany and Poland. We all stand in a tiny and dark corridor and Orazio points to a thick wooden door, where the German wing started- we are not allowed to go inside because of health and safety regulations, apparently there is broken glass and the floors and ceiling could collapse at any time. Some children whine that they want to go see inside and their teachers warn them not to misbehave.

Orazio's voice breaks when talking about the German wing but he says nothing about his father at this point in the tour. Other guides tell their own experiences. Ennio Pistoï, a Catholic fighter in the Turin resistance, for example, talks about the hour between five and six when, if your time had come, the Germans would come to get you to beat, interrogate, or perhaps execute you. He tells the kids about the tense silence that would reign at that hour, broken by the arrival of echoing boots and the clanking of doors that always sounded like they were coming towards your own. Beppe Berruto, who was also held in the German wing, would talk about the bed bugs that would take over the cell and suck prisoners' blood and about the infinite battles he waged against them in the agony of waiting in his cell. Berruto's punch line was always that he 'realized that bed bugs are intelligent animals because after I made a moat of water around myself so they couldn't crawl onto me, they climbed up to the ceiling and would let themselves drop right onto my head to continue sucking my blood. They are intelligent animals'. Orazio sometimes repeats these stories or if he is pressed for time he skips them.

We visit the second wing of the prison, a sterile and empty corridor with cells bolted shut. It is a new wing, restored after the riots of 1971 and each cell has a small

sink and a modern toilet. Children peek into the small barred windows that guards used to check on prisoners and they giggle when they look through the tiny peepholes overlooking the toilets. One cell is left open and they all rush in to see until they are told to take turns by the teacher. Orazio lets the groups wander up and down and says nothing. Then he rushes the classes up the stairs and into the new church and then to the back to see the old cubicle chapel and museum. The children are impressed. 'Why are there those tiny windows?' they ask and then they exclaim 'poveretti!' in sympathy for the inmates. Orazio tells them about a passage from Edmondo de Amicis' book *Cuore*, which takes place in the cubicle church, when it was also used for adult literacy classes in the late 19th century.

There is a framed photocopy of a passage in the chapter called *Il prigioniero*-the prisoner, in the museum and one of the students is asked to read it out loud:

He was a teacher in Turin, and he went for the entire winter to give lessons to prisoners, in the judicial prisons. He held his lessons in the church of the prison, which was a round structure, and all around, in the tall and naked walls, there are many small square windows, enclosed by two crossing iron bars, and to each corresponds an extremely tiny cell. He held his lessons walking up and down the dark and cold church, his students looked down from those holes, with their notebooks pressed against the bars...

Those few students who were listening stare up at the cubicle windows and grumble...'how could they follow the teacher through those barred windows?'

The museum is such that children move around chaotically looking at the images in the glass cabinets. Orazio and I hear two girls shriek 'che schifo!' -How gross! - And point at the emaciated body of an Auschwitz prisoner whose photograph sits in one of the cabinets, 'why are they so skinny? They look like skeletons!' and I feel very sorry for Orazio whose father died in Mauthausen. It seems crazy that children in Prima Media should know nothing about the Holocaust and when Orazio tries to explain it to them they seem embarrassed- they did know- they say, and they look at the picture again in silence. Orazio then tells them his father's story as I have described it in the introduction, about the truck Orazio and his mother saw pausing in front of the building and about the pain of never seeing his father again, and only then does he also mention the hundreds of Jews who were assembled in Le Nuove before being sent off to concentration camps, never to return. One teacher steps in and says that they will be studying this later on in the program and Orazio takes us

all out through the new chapel doors and onto a landing overlooking the main rotunda.

From here the scale and size of the prison begins to take shape as we can see the openings to layered floors of cells spreading out in three directions. Standing on the balcony one can see the wide area from which guards kept watch on each wing and a narrow octagonal window up on the ceiling, which fills the hall with ghostly light. There are orange stains all over the vaulted ceiling and one student asks about them. Orazio explains that they are food and egg marks from some of the riots of the 1970s when food was often a source of tension in the prison and would sometimes trigger riots. Directly below the octagonal window on the ceiling is a hole in the ground, with a spiralling staircase, which descends into darkness. We walk down to the hole and notice a wooden sign with a red arrow pointing us to the 'cells of the condemned men'.

One by one we descend, holding on to a blue railing, the only colourful thing in the large grey hall. We are told to imagine that we are being led there for our last night on earth, 'as happened to tens of prisoners of the Nazi-Fascists'. As we get to the bottom of the stairs our eyes have to adjust to the sudden darkness. It is considerably colder down there and the air we breathe is damp and permeated by the smell of one and a half centuries of mould. Once our eyes are adjusted we can see complex colourful colonies of microorganisms, fungi and mould cover the walls where paint is caking and crumbling unto the dirt floor. As in the rotunda above us we find ourselves at the intersection of three main corridors of cells but only one is open and visible, the others are blocked by large metal doors and several chains tightly sealed by rusty locks. Before electricity was brought to the prison only candles, portable gas lamps, and torches would have illuminated this area.

Orazio has already entered the open corridor, which seems wider than the one we visited upstairs due to the low vaulted ceiling. To our right are copies of propaganda posters from the war claiming that 'La Germania è veramente vostra amica'-Germany is really your friend or advertising the Italian SS 'Onore Fedeltà Coraggio'-Honour, loyalty, courage. As we reach the end of the corridor we see a metal grid holding the blown-up black-and-white portraits of men, most of which look like they are in their early twenties. Beyond these photographs, nailed to the back wall of the corridor, are photographs of the commemorations at the Martinetto, the site where the Nazis and Salò forces performed their executions during the war.

On the ground below the photographs are red votive candles of the kind normally seen in cemeteries and churches, glowing in the semi-darkness. The vaulted ceiling, the light of the candle and the faces of the ‘martyrs’ make this space appear like a shrine and we all automatically begin to whisper.

Orazio asks for the youngest student to come forth and read a passage from Padre Ruggero’s book ‘My condemned men’, it’s a letter from one of the young men who were executed under Padre Ruggero’s care. A very short boy with a high-pitched voice reads: ‘Dear mama, when you will read these few lines I will no longer be in this world but in a better one. Be brave dear mama, don’t give up, you understand? Think that your Donato is going to join his dear grandparents who loved him so much and pray for me. Goodbye mama, Donato’.³⁵⁹ Sometimes more political last letters are read, letters that end with ‘W L’Italia!’³⁶⁰ Or with sentences such as ‘let those who will remain remember me, one who fought to prepare the way for a free and new Italy’.³⁶¹ When these letters are read the guides will talk about the importance of remembering the sacrifice and suffering of those who died for the freedom of future generations. These men must not have died in vain, they say.

The children are then encouraged to go into one of the cells of the condemned men. Its walls are covered in red and rusty stains and the cell is extremely small. Sometimes a single candle will be burning when the children come in. Orazio tells us that one of the partisans wrote on the wall in his own blood: ‘better to die than to betray’ and suddenly the rusty stains on the wall look like a palimpsest of bloody messages no longer legible.

We all fall silent and we slowly make our way out back into the darkness of the basement corridor. The cells we saw and those hidden behind metal doors were used as punishment cells and to host those prisoners who would face murder by their fellow inmates in the underground code of the prison- paedophiles and rapists, killers of women and children.

Orazio tells the students about how the punishment cells were used in the 19th century when prisoners would be chained to the wall, naked and with scarcely any food, forced to urinate and defecate on the spot, unwashed for days, pestered by insects and rats. He does not talk about the far more recent use of containment beds,

³⁵⁹ Letter written by Donato Simonetti, in: Padre Ruggero Cipolla, *I miei condannati a morte*, Il Punto, Grugliasco (To), 2002, p.113.

³⁶⁰ Letter written by Orazio Barbero in Cipolla, *I miei condannati*, ibid. p. 79.

³⁶¹ Letter written by Lorenzo Viale, in Cipolla, *I miei condannati*, ibid. p. 92.

used well into the 1970s, where prisoners were tied to beds in roughly the same conditions, in those very rooms, just as damp and cold, as they were one hundred years earlier. The corridors which we cannot visit were a stage for the most hidden violence of the prison and it is not surprising that they remain closed to us who are left to imagine the horrors, the pain, the solitude.

We make our way back up the stairs and exit the prison via a long straight corridor on the ground floor, full of doors leading to offices. Prisoners called this corridor 'Via Roma',³⁶² as it was the 'main street' of the prison, an area of concentrated activity. The matriculation office was the main focus of these activities; the first place prisoners would report to, the place where all activities were recorded, including the much longed for departure. Prisoners were constantly coming and going up and down Via Roma, on their way in, on their way out, on their way to see lawyers and judges, to visit relatives, to make practical requests, to sign documents and release statements, to leave their weight, height and fingerprints on large cardboard files neatly stored in the archive. All the offices are closed and empty now though they will probably reopen after renovation, to host low-ranking lawyers and clerks working for the courthouse just across the street.

Orazio leads the children back out into the courtyard and he tells them that the tour is over. The class starts bubbling with excitement again and voices are immediately raised quite high. 'Back to school!' the kids rush out into the city, into its bustling streets, and the land of the living. Orazio goes back with me to lock up and turn off the lights. He doesn't say much and shakes his head a lot. When we are finished and standing in front of the locked gate I watch him leave the building in his big heavy coat, bowing his head down slightly out of the habit that comes from being tall, as he limps away, into the fog.

This long narrative section should provide the reader with a clear sense of how the tour in the prison is run as well as of some of the themes that will be addressed in this chapter. The following section will describe the work of the organization behind the tours in the prison.

³⁶² From an interview with Luca Nicolotti.

NO MAN IS AN ISLAND...

All mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated...As therefore the bell that rings to a sermon, calls not upon the preacher only, but upon the congregation to come: so this bell calls us all: but how much more me, who am brought so near the door by this sickness.... No man is an island, entire of itself...any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

-John Donne, Meditation XVII

The committee 'Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola'-no man is an island- which drew its name from the John Donne Meditation cited above, was founded on March 14, 2001 by a diverse group of people concerned about the future of the prison Le Nuove and about the erasure of historical memory that its demolition or purely commercial usage would, in their eyes, entail. Amongst its founders were members of the group 'friends of Padre Ruggero Cipolla',³⁶³ as well as ex prison administrators, inmates held in Le Nuove during the Second World War and their children, as well as amateur local historians. In their founding document members of the committee describe themselves as follows: 'We are a group made up of people who are different in age, cultural and professional background but who are nevertheless joined by the desire not to allow indifference towards the past to prevail and by the need to manifest our care for historical memory to be kept alive, re-proposed and transmitted to future generations'.³⁶⁴ They were acting out of a sense of urgency not only relating to the fear of the demolition of the prison building but also of a more general 'loss of memory' they lamented was affecting the broader Italian society, particularly in conjunction with the rise of the neo-Fascist party which was feared to gain seats in Berlusconi's soon to be elected right-wing coalition government.

The stated objectives of the committee, according to its founding document, were the following:

³⁶³ A group founded in 1998 with the goal of increasing meetings between students, witnesses of the second world war and prison volunteers involved in the care of needy inmates. Many of these volunteers were long-time friends of Padre Ruggero having worked with him in the prison and perhaps even having been mentored by him when he was supervising the activities of religious volunteers of the volunteer organization S. Vincenzo Carceraria and S. Cafasso, as well as 'Redenzione'.

³⁶⁴ Founding pamphlet of the Comitato Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola produced in 2001.

1. To salvage the architectural complex of Le Nuove as a historical memory and an emblematic place for 130 years of our city, which cannot be considered extinguished or concluded in coincidence with the ending of its function as a prison.
2. To open the structure in order to welcome free people who wish to understand and reflect, as well as institutions, NGOs, companies willing to show solidarity and able to pay attention to the past (...). The same place, which was used to alienate and exclude, can become an experimental laboratory in which to allow differences to coexist.
3. To listen to the direct testimony of those who suffered the violence of the system and of other men, of those who survived deportation and concentration camps.
4. To gather documents relating to those who were protagonists in the Resistance so that those lives spent for the affirmation of values and democratic institutions be known and appreciated by the younger generations.³⁶⁵

Between 2001 and 2004 Le Nuove was in a temporary limbo as the prison was slowly being decommissioned, its last inmates were waiting to be transferred to Le Vallette and the works of renovation of those parts of the prison, which were assigned to the city and the Ministry of Justice were just beginning. Discussions over the future of Le Nuove were held periodically over many years, in town hall and city planning meetings, starting as far back as the mid 1970s when it became clear that the prison could no longer efficiently function as the city's main prison. Confusions over who exactly should decide of its fate accounted for a failure to reach a clear agreement: the prison was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice, but once decommissioned it was unclear whether it belonged to the city (that owned the land) or to the ministry and there was the further problem that its unusual and old architecture called for protection from the Ministry of Culture. As long as the prison was still in use its future as a building was ensured but once the last prisoners were getting ready to leave the possibility of demolition felt like a realistic threat. It was at the critical time of decommissioning that the group *Nessun Uomo*

³⁶⁵ Comitato *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola*, founding document, p.3.

E' Un'isola started its work of lobbying to ensure that the prison be preserved as a heritage site for the city. The group campaigned heavily to ensure the preservation of the prison building, obtained a letter from the President of the Republic supporting their suggestion that it be land-marked³⁶⁶ and began running regular tours for public schools and private visitors such as the one I described above. Ex prison guards, survivors of the holocaust, and political prisoners held in Le Nuove during the Second World War guided students through the empty corridors and abandoned cells of the prison, authorized by the director of the new prison 'Le Vallette', who was still temporarily in charge of the building. The committee was also involved in organizing debates, commemorative events³⁶⁷ and in facilitating cultural events such as theatre performances.³⁶⁸

In 2000 Le Nuove appeared as one of the sites listed in the Istituto Piemontese per la Storia della Resistenza e della Società Contemporanea's guide book *Torino 1938/45. Una guida per la memoria*- Turin 1938/45 A guidebook for memory. Starting in 2001 it also started to be incorporated in the events surrounding the *Giorno della Memoria*- Day of Memory, a day meant to reflect on the Holocaust and on issues surrounding the racial laws and deportation, commemorated once a year. On the first day of memory Padre Ruggero and Turin's head Rabbi both were present at the commemorative ceremony, which took place in the main hall of the prison. During the day of memory special tours are run inside the prison and many of the ex resistance fighters who sometimes run the tours give their testimony. Following the lobbying work of Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola the mayor or his delegates visit the prison regularly to give speeches in commemoration of the resistance fighters who were executed by the nazi Fascists, and of the prison guards

³⁶⁶ Following a letter of the 24 March, 2002 to Carlo Azeglio Ciampi by the group asking him to protect the prison site and allow tours, the President of the Republic wrote back claiming to be in support of the group's initiative and said shortly thereafter, during a visit to Robben Island in South Africa that Italy should 'learn from others' referring to Le Nuove, according to Secondo Ercole. Secondo Ercole, *Le Testimonianze di Padre Ruggero. Carcere e Resistenza, 2d expanded edition*, Comitato Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola, Turin, 2005, pp. 150-151. The previous President of the Republic, Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, had land marked the outer walls and the inner chapel by a Presidential decree in 1999 (a copy of the official land marking letter in Archive of Padre Ruggero Cipolla, Convent of Saint Bernardino da Siena, Saluzzo).

³⁶⁷ For example during the year 2003-2004 they arranged to have the commemoration of the prison guards who died in service and of the soldiers who died in the First World War (26 October); the commemoration of the policemen killed outside Le Nuove's walls in 1978 (14 December); the 'Giornata della memoria' (25 January); and the commemoration of the two female guards who died in the fires at Le Vallette (3 June).

³⁶⁸ The Compagnia del Teatro Stabile held a yearly performance in the prison starting in 2001 including amongst its titles a play called *Raccontare L'Inferno* made up of excerpts from Dante's *Inferno* and Primo Levi's work *If this is a man*.

who died in service. Nevertheless obliteration is still evoked as a concrete menace for the building whenever the group wants to muster support for itself. On 28 February 2005, for example, a letter was sent out urgently to all those who expressed an interest in the future of Le Nuove. It read: 'Alarming news about the ex prison Le Nuove. Disturbing and pressing incitements on the re-use of the part of the building assigned to the city, according to the Protocol of Agreement of 7 July 2003 totally overturn the historical and civic significance of the architectural structure and radically erase its historical memory which honours all Italians'. The letter goes further and states that *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola* finds it 'Gravely unjust to ignore, even partially, this physical space which must be visited in its entirety to understand how fundamental it is for the historical memory of the Italians.' Not only does the group demand that significant portions of the building be kept and preserved for visitors, but it also suggests that only by visiting these areas *in their entirety* can visitors grasp the full historical importance of the building. The organization not only relies on the building to produce emotions, but it seems to believe that memory is sedimented in the place and that memory is fully transmissible only through physical contact. Memory, and sacred memory in particular, would thus be seen to function somehow like radiation, contaminating visitors then sent out to spread its energy on the outside. To diminish the exposure of visitors to the 'memory field' would thus be reducing the concentration of memory and its subsequent power as a force, which the group sees as central to the historical understanding of all Italians.

The first exhibition sponsored by the committee in Le Nuove and titled 'No man is an island' was designed and arranged by students of the technical high school 'Maiorana' and of the 'Albe Steiner' Institute. The exhibition was an interpretation of some of the documents pictures and last letters of the condemned men who were assisted by Padre Ruggero Cipolla and whom he wrote about in his book *I miei condannati a morte*- my condemned men. It consisted of a series of student projects made within the prison and about the prison, involving research into the history of the building, the testimony of witnesses, creative performances and artefacts (such as a metal moon made of safety pins each representing a prisoner held in Le Nuove between 1943 and 1945) and an installation of photographs and last letters of the condemned men. The pamphlet from the exhibition states that:

Each student lived this experience in a personal and autonomous way and at times with sharp creativity (...) but the common intent was to stick to the facts and, with discretion, to document the passage of the condemned men in the prison, without violating the sacredness of the place that, wrapped in silence and in the intense cold, certainly contributed to stimulating reflections.³⁶⁹

The photographs of the condemned men which were hung in the underground cells where the men spent their last nights, remained part of the semi-permanent tours in Le Nuove until 2004 and it was members of the committee who added candles and photographs of the site at Il Martinetto where the condemned men were executed, further imbuing the place with sacred undertones.

The exhibition pamphlet continues:

In a world of continuous visual and sound stimuli the 'wing of death' - braccio della morte- transmits a great feeling of chill, both physical and emotional and is conducive to listening to silence, to deciphering the sounds of the past. Thus it is precisely silence, which is able to communicate, in a clear and definitive manner, more than a description would, deep solitude, confusion and despair.³⁷⁰

It is a fundamental assumption of both the exhibition and the committee that the space of the prison itself transmits memory and triggers reflections, that the prison walls are essential physical witnesses and provide testimony of suffering. The past is seen to continue to exist in the building and to continue to produce 'sounds' in the silence of its walls.

During an interview Felice Tagliente cited Padre Ruggero saying that 'every brick in the building is a witness to tears, to pain and to blood' and then explained to me how he believed a building like Le Nuove could transmit memory and feeling. He said:

From a psychological perspective there is first of all a perceptual component, which gives you a particular emotional reaction. Then there is a, I would say, cognitive aspect, which involves our individual memory, the experiences we have had, and the stories that we all have assimilated through others. And then, this is a very important aspect, is the existential aspect, i.e. one comes

³⁶⁹ From *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola. Dal carcere al Martinetto. Un percorso espositivo sulla condizione carceraria rivissuta attraverso gli internati della Repubblica Sociale Italiana. Carcere Giudiziario 'Le Nuove' Torino*, Sponsored by Albe Steiner Torino, I.T.I.S. 'E. Maiorana' Grugliasco, *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola*, Città di Torino, Provincia di Torino, Regione Piemonte, Grafica Nizza, Collegno (TO), 2001, p.7.

³⁷⁰ *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola*, ibid. p.7.

in here, sees and then imagines and then identifies. (...) And then one understands, in my opinion this fact is sufficient to humanize the society outside (...) because it is an objective fact, a symbolic fact that speaks for itself. And symbolism, the symbolic aspect, I believe is the (...) existential aspect which is not perceived with the eyes but with the heart and with the mind.

The tours organized by *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola* consciously play on an imagined shared symbolic order and try to place visitors in a state in which they can identify with those who were held in the prison, so that their emotional response to that identification will 'humanize them'. In John Donne's concept visitors are to be made conscious of not being islands, and to learn that every man's death and suffering diminishes them too. This induced identification contains implicit dangers, which I shall return to later on in this chapter. Let it be said that the committee uses the building and its dark and empty spaces, kept spectral and enriched by the tragic stories of those who suffered in the prison walls, to produce a very particular narrative of collective memory based on suffering, mourning and empathy, consciously aimed at a moral education and at the enlightenment of society.

In the founding document of *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola* the committee writes:

The fear of losing memory (forgetting) and of seeing the suffering of the last witnesses of deportation or of incarceration for ideological reasons made useless, pushes us not to waste time and human resources. In fact, to contribute to rendering the physical place still visible means making perceptible the awareness of the material, moral, psychological, spiritual and physical suffering of those noble spirits who deserve not to suffer indifference and oblivion.³⁷¹

The physical availability of the prison building is here assumed to contribute to an almost sensorial understanding of the suffering of the deportees and political prisoners held in *Le Nuove*. The physical preservation of the building is thus seen as a moral imperative against the dangers of indifference and oblivion.

Initially the group had insisted on using the space of *Le Nuove* for furthering debates and discussions about the practices of incarceration in general and for getting the general public to meet and better understand individuals normally only

³⁷¹ *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola*, *ibid.* p.4.

thought of as criminals. Ordinary criminals were included in the organization's founding document:

The architectural structure of the ex prison counts amongst its users not only those who committed crimes, but also those who, because of their race or of the political ideas they held, were deported to concentration camps or were delivered to the execution squads to be shot. Our committee wants to give a discreet, committed and motivated contribution so that the suffering of all the people who had to live in the ex prison is not made useless.³⁷²

The focus in this statement was on a suffering shared by political and common prisoners, to which the preservation of the building and the work of the committee were to pay tribute. Over time the organization's activities and power became increasingly concentrated in the hands of its director Felice Tagliente and his wife Maria who gradually shifted the emphasis of the organization's work from a more generalized acknowledgement of the suffering that occurred in Le Nuove to the more specific focus on the Resistance and especially on Padre Ruggero and his version of prison history.

The Taglientes had the ultimate say about allowing visitors into the prison, giving access to researchers such as myself or journalists and they personally put an enormous amount of energy and work into the prison and into running the organization. They did so with a very clear top-down leadership technique, however, which quickly alienated many of the early members, especially those less keen on maintaining such a religious emphasis on the tours (which often ended in a mass). Angelo Toppino, an amateur historian and the librarian in Turin's new prison Le Vallette, for example, was particularly eager for the old prison to be used as a link between the new prison and the city, and to raise awareness of current carceral problems in historical context. After a few years working for the organization, however, he became frustrated with it and following his departure the emphasis on ordinary criminals was eliminated. In an article from *La Stampa* from 2004 the goals of the organization were described as follows:

The objective of the committee is to preserve Le Nuove as historical heritage of Turin, and to open the ex prison to those who wish to understand and hear the testimony of the protagonists of the Resistance or of those who suffered because of deportation. Privileged audience are especially young people, to

³⁷² Comitato Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola, founding document, p. 2.

transmit them awareness, making them participate in the suffering experienced to win freedom and democracy.³⁷³

The organization argues that young people can participate in the suffering of those who were once held in the prison; as I hoped to convey in the descriptive introduction to this chapter, however, this participation is supposed to be achieved via a process which is very painful to guides like Orazio, who are deeply invested in the building and in this process. For Orazio the failure to produce empathy, interest and participation is disturbing and offensive although he continues to believe in the process and to dedicate a large part of his time to leading the tours in the building. I will return later in this chapter to the role of empathy and suffering in prison museum tours, and to the inclusion and exclusion from these discussions of ordinary criminals and their memory. I will now shift to the question of the problems involved in transforming prisons into heritage sites more generally to see how the work of *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola* may compare to that of other organizations trying to preserve prison memory.

³⁷³ Silvia Dallo, 'Un museo per ricordare il dolore', *La Stampa*, 22 April 2004, p.23.

PRISONS AS HERITAGE



Fig.31 -A courtyard in Le Nuove with panoptical exercise yard circa 1910.

Once it became clear that Le Nuove could no longer serve as Turin's main prison after the riots and overcrowding of the early and mid 1970s, and that it should be replaced by a bigger and newer architectural complex in the working class neighbourhood of Le Vallette, there were frequent discussions in newspapers and at city hall about what should be made of the old building. In the early days it was assumed that the building would be torn down and it was just a question of deciding whether to have a park or a sports stadium rise in its place.³⁷⁴ As the idea of preserving the building on architectural grounds started circulating, 'dangerous' readings of its meaning were voiced. One in particular, expressed in an article in 1992 entitled 'What to make of Le Nuove', strikes at the core of the problem of transforming prisons into heritage sites. It began with the sentence 'Le Nuove today risks seeming like a monument to detention'.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁴ See for example 'Il carcere in costruzione non sostituirà le Nuove', *Stampasera*, 24 March 1976 or continued the next day 'Già in costruzione l'altro carcere al posto delle Nuove un giardino', *La Stampa* 25 March 1976. In 1972 when discussions were being carried out over how to solve the explosive situation in Le Nuove the building was not only seen as inadequate for hosting inmates, it also came in the way of the Regulatory plan for the city which called for a green area in its place. At that time 'the demolition of Le Nuove and the construction of a new prison' was the issue of the day and there was no discussion of preserving it for its historical or architectural value. (See for example 'Un incontro in comune per trasferire le Nuove' in *Stampasera*, 6 June 1984.

³⁷⁵ L.bc. 'Cosa fare delle Nuove', *La Stampa*, 15 February 1992, p.33. As late as 1997 the director of Public Works in Turin, Franco Corsico, told journalists about the plans for Le Nuove 'The area is destined to greenery and services. The State will have no interest in maintaining that building' (from 'Il direttore delle carceri Coiro ha presentato il piano per liberare l'area: "Le Nuove al comune tra tre anni"', *La Stampa*, 27 February 1997, p.33).

No state or community will willingly spend money to produce a memorial to its own failures and injustice, unless these can comfortably be ascribed to a previous regime in which case the prison will stand as a symbol of the injustice of the previous order, or unless pushed to do so by powerful external pressures recognizing some sort of 'universal' value in such an act. For a prison to succeed as a museum it must 'prove' itself as a site of extraordinary meaning, a meaning which goes beyond the prison's mere disturbing physical presence. The following sections of this chapter are interested in assessing the mechanisms by which this type of meaning can be evoked and inscribed into a prison building such as Le Nuove and the obstacles volunteer organizations face when trying to get their prison accepted as a heritage site. To explore these points it will be useful to turn to other prison institutions and to consider their histories and transformations.

Tina Loo and Carolyn Strange in their article 'Rock Prison of Liberation: Alcatraz Island and the American Imagination' wrote that:

While it is unusual for authorities to encourage citizens to visit sites burdened with unpleasant memories, there are circumstances under which government undertakes such projects (the most dramatic examples being the preservation of former Nazi death camps). In the aftermath of the traumatic or embarrassing past, a variety of memorial strategies typically emerge: obliteration, designation, rectification, and sanctification.³⁷⁶

I will now discuss the fate of four other prisons in their post-penitentiary existence as examples of the various stages Tina Loo and Carolyn Strange identified, as a way of assessing where Le Nuove stands in this spectrum as its volunteers struggle to have it preserved as a heritage site and turned into a permanent museum. The Brazilian prison Carandiru will be used as an example of obliteration; the Maze/Long Kesh Prison in Northern Ireland will be an example of designation; Alcatraz in the United States will be an example of rectification; and finally Robben Island in South Africa will provide an example of sanctification. These four prisons have been chosen as examples of the possible ways prisons have been dealt with by the state and by volunteer organizations striving to get them preserved. Alcatraz and Robben Island have been chosen especially because of their success as tourist sites and because of their international fame.

³⁷⁶ Tina Loo and Carolyn Strange, 'Rock Prison of Liberation: Alcatraz Island and the American Imagination', *Radical History Review*, Fall 2000 pp.27-56, p.49.

I do not wish here to presume to connect the very complex political realities surrounding the destruction or preservation of these prisons with those surrounding Le Nuove in Turin nor to suggest that Le Nuove is similar in history or architecture to any of these ex prisons. Many other prisons such as the eastern penitentiary in Philadelphia or even Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin would have provided more historical and architectural parallels with Le Nuove. I hope comparing these more extreme and internationally renown prisons to Le Nuove, however, will help universalise some of the problems facing Le Nuove as a museum/tourist site and to place Le Nuove within a broader global prison museum context.

After describing the fate of these other four prisons I will discuss some of the similarities in the memorial practices surrounding those prisons and Le Nuove in terms of the more universal problems and tensions relating to the preservation of prison sites, as well as the arguments and moral imperatives posed by all these prisons in their failed or successful journeys towards heritage and the future. I will conclude by raising some broad questions about the relationship between memory and place, the assumed morality of memory and on the question of ‘suffering’ as an argument for heritage formation.

OBLITERATION

The case of the Brazilian prison known as *Carandiru*



Fig.32 -Demolition of prison at Carandiru on 8 February 2002

The *Casa de Detenção* prison, colloquially known as *Carandiru* after a nearby commuter train station in one of São Paulo's poorest and most violent neighbourhoods, was used as a prison starting in the late 19th century. Much like Le Nuove, in its early days it was heralded as a model prison where discipline and work could be carried out in maximum efficiency and cleanliness, as documented by a short film made in 1928.³⁷⁷ Over the years, like Le Nuove and any prison for that matter, Carandiru reflected many of the social and political transformations that the city of São Paulo was undergoing, and as crime rose so did malcontent and overcrowding in Carandiru. Originally designed to host 3000 inmates, the prison usually held 7000.³⁷⁸ On 2 October 1992 a riot in the prison led to a police raid that lasted eleven hours and resulted in the deaths of 111 inmates. The police raid saw indiscriminate violence unleashed against largely unarmed inmates and few of its perpetrators were ever brought to justice. Following this shocking massacre and further reports of the inhumane medical conditions inmates were living under, the prison was closed down and finally demolished in 2002.

A film entitled *Carandiru*, filmed in the empty prison shortly before it was blown up, apparently is all that is left of that space. The film was based on the work of Drauzio Varella a physician who worked in the prison and interviewed several of the prison's inhabitants. His book *Estação Carandiru- Carandiru Station*,³⁷⁹ was an assemblage of those stories, manipulated and transformed so as to protect prisoner identities. The film serves as a document of the prison space now demolished, as an indictment of the Brazilian police and its indiscriminate violence, and as a memorial to those who died. The site itself no longer exists, however, and no museum shall be built on its foundations. The demolition of the building was presented by the film and by the little literature available, as a cathartic act, cleansing a site of shame and horror, of suffering so great that the only possible response was its obliteration.³⁸⁰ The physical obliteration of the building does not necessarily imply the end of

³⁷⁷ Film called *Penitenciária do estado*, reproduced in the special features section of the DVD *Carandiru*.

³⁷⁸ Metroactive Movies/Carandiru, www.metroactive.com/papers/metro/05.19.04/carandiru-0421.html (visited 25 July, 2005).

³⁷⁹ Drauzio Varella, *Estação Carandiru*, Companhia das Letras, São Paulo, 2003.

³⁸⁰ For an exploration of the greater significance of the destruction of buildings within the urban context see: Melanie Van der Hoorn, *Indispensable Eyesores: an Anthropology of Undesired Buildings*, PhD thesis, Universiteit Utrecht, May 2005.

memory, however, although it does imply the end of potential memorial functions and performances at the site.

DESIGNATION

The Maze/Long Kesh prison in Northern Ireland



Fig.33 -Prisoners during the 'blanket' and 'no wash' protest in 1978

My second example, the Maze/Long Kesh prison near Lisburn in Northern Ireland involves a much more complex web of agents struggling over the prison's post-penitentiary future and its potential consequences for future interpretations of its past, and with it of the history of Northern Ireland. This example corresponds to the stage of 'designation' identified by Tina Loo and Carolyn Strange. The Department of Environment, in fact, has decided that a part of the prison- H block six as well as the prison hospital, the administration block, the chapel and the perimeter walls and watch tower- are to be listed buildings and cannot therefore be knocked down. Designation, unlike obliteration, involves the decision to preserve some part of a site, which is recognized as historically important. The stage of designation is just a first step towards the transformation of a site into heritage and it captures the ambiguities, dangers, and tensions surrounding contested pasts. In order to explain this a brief history of the Maze/Long Kesh is needed.

Opened in 1971 after the Northern Ireland Government introduced internment without trial, the Maze/Long Kesh became an embodiment as well as a symbol of the 'troubles' in Northern Ireland. Duncan McLaughlan, a former governor retired from the prison service told the BBC:

There are many notorious prisons in the world...Alcatraz and Devil's Island. None had any significant effect or influence on the life of the community in which it was based. Maze is the one exception to this. It is a significant exception and it became inextricably bound up in the political difficulties in Northern Ireland. It didn't cause the troubles but it became part of them and contributed to them.³⁸¹

Hosting some of the most infamous members of both the Irish Republican Army and the Ulster Volunteer Force (as well as members of other Republican and Loyalist paramilitary groups) the prison saw early riots exploding in order for members of these groups to receive political status. The 'special category status' was granted in the early 1970s and prisoners were allowed free association, extra visits, food parcels and to wear their own clothes. This special status, however, was revoked for those arrested after 1 March 1976 and the Republican prisoners who were held in compounds known as 'the H blocks' for their 'H' shape architectural structure, began a series of protests to put pressure on the British Government to recognize them as political prisoners and grant them special category status.

The first of these protests had as its goal the right to wear civilian clothes instead of the prison uniforms. Since the prison authorities would not grant prisoners use of their own clothes they chose to wear their own bed sheets and blankets instead (see figure 33). Prisoners involved in this protest would be described as being 'on the blanket'. By 1978 more than 300 men were on the blanket but they were not given political status.

At that point prisoners shifted to a much more dramatic protest tactic, they started what was known to the British as the 'dirty protest' and to the Irish as the 'no wash protest'.³⁸² The protest consisted in prisoners covering the walls of their cells with excrement and refusing to wash, in destroying furniture in the cells and letting food rot in order to make the entire atmosphere in the wings noxious. The protest lasted for five years and saw more than four hundred prisoners involved. Although it was picked up by the media this protest too proved ineffectual and in October 1980 and then again in March 1981 prisoners went on to hold a mass hunger strike to the death. Ten prisoners died. Amongst them was the 27 year-old Bobby Sands, who

³⁸¹ 'The Prison That Served Its Time', BBC News- Northern Ireland, 27 July 2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/848603.stm (visited 21 July 2005).

³⁸² For a journalistic account of the blanket and no-wash protest see Tim Pat Coogan, *On the Blanket: the Inside Story of the IRA prisoners' 'Dirty protest'*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2002.

had been elected MP in Fermanagh-South Tyrone Westminster, and whose death led to increased enlistment in and support for the IRA and to new waves of violence.

These deaths as well as earlier images of the prisoners living in horrific conditions, which they had themselves created in protest, had a deep resonance with images of Christian martyrdom and were therefore extremely potent as symbols of Catholic oppression in Northern Ireland. Rita Donagh and Richard Hamilton stressed this point in their exhibition booklet from 1983³⁸³ in which they wrote that:

An oft declared British view of the IRA as thugs and hooligans did not match the materialization of Christian Martyrdom so profoundly contained on film (...) The symbols of Christ's agony were there, not only the crucifix on the neck of prisoners and the rosary which confirmed their monastic austerity but the self inflicted suffering which has marked Christianity from its earliest times.

The images of the suffering men, of young lives interrupted in a struggle ignored by the British Government but who nevertheless continued their fight to the death for their cause clearly provided the Republican cause with a whole iconography of heroism and proven injustice.

Between 1971 and 2000, thousands of families in Northern Ireland had their loved ones held in the Maze/Long Kesh and posters and songs depicted the H blocks as symbols of the struggle against British occupation. The memories of the blanket protest, of the dirty protest and the hunger strikes were and still are deeply partisan memories, which are often seen to emphasize grievances and divisions rather than peace and reconciliation although the liberation of Prisoners from the Maze/Long Kesh played a central role in facilitating the signing of the Good Friday Agreements.

In July 2000, most of the prisoners from the Maze/Long Kesh were released and debates started almost immediately about what was to be done with the 360-acre site. It would require a whole separate PhD to do justice to the rich debates, conferences, town hall meetings, art installations, and articles that followed the closure of the prison. I shall here simply and very cursorily identify some of the key

³⁸³ Rita Donagh and Richard Hamilton, *A Cellular Maze- An inquiry through the medium of art aided by film and news photographs into dimensions {height depth} {breadth length} and habitation of her majesty's prison Maze formerly Long Kesh internment camp in Atrim, one of the nine counties of Ulster, Ancient Northern province of Ireland*, Orchard Gallery, Londonderry, 1983, p.6.

parties involved, and the arguments they raised to support or denounce any preservation of the prison site.³⁸⁴

On the one hand were organizations of ex prisoners such as Coiste na n-Iarchimí (the national network of Republican ex-prisoners), Teach na failte (an organization of Republican socialist ex-prisoners and family support, which was also involved in placing memorial plaques to the Republican dead around the city of Belfast and in other cities), as well as members of parties supportive of the Republican cause such as Sinn Féin who were pushing for preserving the prison and building a museum on the site.³⁸⁵ On the other there were the prison authorities and Loyalist supporters who wanted the prison torn down as well as the Lisburn City Council which had in fact decided to raze the prison to the ground and to replace it with a sports stadium which would be a 'powerful symbol of how much the province had changed'.³⁸⁶

The decisions surrounding what should be done with the Maze were taken as barometers of change and as tests of how divided the communities in Northern Ireland still were. On a website for Teach na failte an article reads: 'The next few months will decide the future of Long Kesh/Maze and it will be a test of how far we have come to see if both sections of the community can decide on a future for this important and historic site'.³⁸⁷ Mike Ritchie, director of Coiste na n-Iarchimí warned that: 'It would be a shame if we were to bury our past without retaining some of the site as a place of reflection and learning for students of all ages who have an interest in conflict resolution, prison history and its importance for political development on the Island.' He also said that 'establishing a museum' on the site 'would facilitate

³⁸⁴ A paper on this subject 'The architecture of containment: the H blocks of Long Kesh/Maze and the representation of conflict in Ireland' was presented by Louise Purbrick from Brighton University at the conference *The Politics of Cultural Memory* held at Manchester Metropolitan University 4-6 November 2004. Louise Purbrick also collaborated on a book of photographs of the Maze/Long Kesh in its current emptied out state. The book is by Donovan Wylie, *The Maze*, Granta, London, 2003. For a discussion of the self-presentation of ex prisoners from the Maze see Stephen Hopkins, 'The Politics of Commemoration and Conflict: Studying Political Autobiography in Contemporary Northern Ireland', paper prepared for the Political Studies Association Annual Conference, University of Leeds, April 2005.

³⁸⁵ Home Page Teach na Failte, <http://www.teachnafailte.org/index.htm> and: Home Page Coiste na n-Iarchimí, <http://www.coiste.ie/> (both visited 1 October 2005)

³⁸⁶ As reported on 25 June, 2004 by Charles Sennott for the Boston Globe in his article 'Stadium or Museum suggested for site of IRA hunger strikes?' http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2004/06/25/stadium_museum_suggested_for_site_of_ira_hunger_strikes?mode=PF (visited 21 July 2005)

³⁸⁷ Teach na failte-Republican Socialist Ex-Prisoner and Family Support. 'News Stories: A Maze of Possibilities' http://www.teachnafailte.org/maze_1.htm (visited 21 July 2005)

dialogue, understanding and healing'.³⁸⁸ The chief inspector of prisons, however, was said to have had no doubt about what should happen to the prison: 'If its days are numbered I hope it is razed to the ground as quickly as possible after it is finally emptied, and confined to history'.³⁸⁹

The final word went to the Department of the Environment, which found that H block six (together with other buildings) should become a listed building. The report stated that 'the building has heightened historical interest due to its association with the 'dirty' protest, hunger strikes, the 1983 escape and the murder of Billy Wright' the report went on to say that H block six 'represents a significant development in the construction history of British penal architecture'.³⁹⁰ This listed status which sees The Maze/Long Kesh designated as a site where commemorations may take place, does not mean that a museum will be allowed to emerge on the site. There are fears on the Loyalist side that a museum would become a shrine to Republicans and although members of ex prisoner groups such as Mr. McKeown assured otherwise: 'the prison has a special significance to Republicans but this is not about turning it into a shrine',³⁹¹ the special significance that the H-blocks have acquired in Republican popular lore clearly contains the potential to glorify especially the ten hunger strikers who died as martyrs to the cause.

If the debates over the future of The Maze/Long Kesh were tense in the years immediately following its closure, the IRA bank robbery in winter 2005, which raised the spectre of a return to conflict, further complicated relations between those who want to see the prison preserved as a heritage site and those who want it demolished. In spite of IRA disarmament this summer, tensions seem far from appeased, the violent riots of September 2005 in Belfast a further sign that anger and unrest are still unpredictable. The volatility of the atmosphere surrounding the future of Northern Ireland and therefore also future interpretations of its past confirms what Jane Leonard of the Northern Ireland Museums and Galleries wondered at a conference held in 2003 discussing the possibility of building a museum at the

³⁸⁸ These comments appeared in the minutes of a conference held on 4 June 2003 entitled 'A Museum at Long Kesh or the Maze?' at Lisburn Lagan Valley Island Centre funded by the EU programme for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland through the Cross-Border Consortium and Coiste na n-Iarchimí, http://www.coiste.ie/a_museum_at_long_kesh_or_the_maz.htm (visited 20 July, 2005)

³⁸⁹ CNN Specials-Northern Ireland, <http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2000/n.ireland/maze.html> (visited 21 July 2005)

³⁹⁰ From David Gordon, 'H Block is Granted Listed Status' in *The Belfast Telegraph*, 16 May, 2005.

³⁹¹ Gordon, *The Belfast Telegraph*, *ibid*.

Maze/Long Kesh. She wondered 'whether it (a museum) might not be more likely to get consensus if, like Kilmainham in Dublin, some decades passed to let emotions reduce with respect to the jail'. Michael Culbert, a former prisoner and member of Coiste na n-Iarchimí said then that 'at least preserving the site would ensure that when consensus is achieved there would be something to work with'.³⁹² The listing of H block six and the other parts of the prison amongst historic buildings leaves the possibility open for some later museum to be built and appeases, for now, those weary about a complete erasure of their history.

RECTIFICATION

The Alcatraz prison museum, U.S.A.

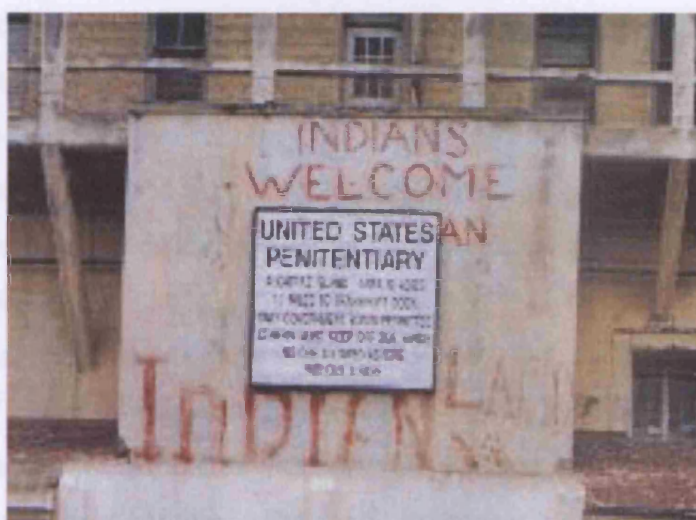


Fig.34 -Graffiti claiming Alcatraz as 'Indian Land' at arrivals dock

While the first two examples were examples of prisons that did not or were not managing to be transformed into museums, the prison museum at Alcatraz is one example of a successful and profitable transformation of a prison site into heritage. With 1.3 million visitors a year, 'the Rock'- as the prison island is colloquially known- attracts visitors mostly thanks to its notoriety sparked by Hollywood films³⁹³ and crime novels.³⁹⁴ A visit to Alcatraz is now incorporated in most of the S.

³⁹² See conference proceedings 'A Museum at Long Kesh or the Maze?' at Lisburn Lagan Valley Island Centre funded by the EU programme for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland through the Cross-Border Consortium and Coiste na n-Iarchimí. http://www.coiste.iela_museum_at_long_kesh_or_the_maz.htm (visited 20 July, 2005).

³⁹³ Probably the most famous of all Alcatraz films being: Don Siegel, *Escape from Alcatraz* (U.S.A., 1979) and John Frankenheimer, *The Birdman of Alcatraz* (U.S.A., 1962).

³⁹⁴ For a website that confirms the myths and sensationalism surrounding Alcatraz see the site WelcometoAlcatraz History!!! <http://www.alcatrazhistory.com/> (visited 3 September 2005).

Francisco Bay tourist information packages and the titillating prospect of going inside a real prison cell where some of America's most dangerous prisoners were once held, makes it particularly appealing to families and foreign tourists eager to find traces of the 'wild west' and America's most renown gangsters.

While the tours run by the National Park Services escort visitors through the remaining prison buildings, providing sound effects and emphasizing the Island's maximum security prison past (something for which Annie Coombes and some South African journalists she cites accuse Alcatraz of offering 'instant gratification in the form of a slick, theme-park recreation of horror'³⁹⁵) they also seem to consciously attempt rectification of both the most sensationalized assumptions about the prison that tourists take with them to the island, as well as of some of the most shameful aspects of Alcatraz's history, most notably the removal by force of the Native Americans who had been occupying the Island between 1969 and 1971. Rather than obliterating that memory, the National Park Services retell the story of the 'Indian Occupation' and according to Tina Loo and Carolyn Strange by so doing they try to weave 'the island's history into the noblest American traditions of democratic protest'.³⁹⁶

Alcatraz island was initially used as a military fort, the first built in the Pacific in the 1850s³⁹⁷ and during that time it also served as a military prison where, amongst others, Native American warriors who refused to submit to the laws of the United States were held captive. After the S. Francisco Earthquake of 1906 prisoners from damaged jails on the mainland were temporarily transferred to the island where they soon began construction on a prison complex under horrific conditions and forced labour. By 1912 prisoners were moved to the first cellblocks. The hard labour conditions on the island and the very strict prison regulations led to rumours and public outcry in the 1920s about prisoners living in unspeakable conditions, following which the military was forced to close the prison down. The rise in violent

³⁹⁵ See Annie Coombes' critique of Barbara Loftus's article comparing Alcatraz and Robben Island 'Robben Island, Hallowed Ground of Heroes...But It's Just Plain Hell for Tourists. Alcatraz, A Monument to Monsters...But A Five Star Attraction for Visitors', *Saturday Star*, 20 June 1998, where she also uses the counter-article in response to Barbara Loftus' by Hazel Friedman 'All the paradoxes of a Nation Fuse on the Island of Shame', *Sunday Independent*, 20 September 1998 in: Annie Coombes, *History After Apartheid. Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*, Duke University Press, London, 2003, pp.72-73.

³⁹⁶ Tina Loo and Carolyn Strange, *ibid.* pp.49-50.

³⁹⁷ See the Alcatraz Official Site of the National Parks Services: <http://www.nps.gov/alcatraz/mil.html> (visited 3 August 2005).

and organized crime that followed the Volstead Act of 1920, prohibiting the sale of alcohol across the United States, however, led to the need for a high security prison for the heads of criminal gangs and Alcatraz was reopened by J. Edgar Hoover, the new head of the FBI appointed in 1933. During that time Alcatraz hosted many famous criminals, the most famous of course being Al Capone, followed closely by Machine Gun Kelly.

A few famous attempted escapes also granted Alcatraz much attention in the world-wide press and it was in those years that the myth of Alcatraz as the dangerous maximum security prison where evil men were banished without a chance of escape other than through the most extreme and daring exploits became consolidated. In 1940 another investigation into the conditions at Alcatraz led to further scandals and public outcry. Like the Abu Graib prison scandals or the fleeting information about conditions at Guantanamo Bay today, these allegations of abuse and horrific conditions kept Alcatraz at the forefront of the news and gave the prison the sort of reputation that would allow it to become a synonym for hell in the social imaginary over many years to come. The prison was closed in 1963 largely due to the extreme costs of maintaining it because the wind and salt from the sea were corroding the cement structures.

Once the prison was abandoned there was much discussion about what should be done with the grounds. Amongst the possible plans was a second Statue of Liberty dedicated to the United Nations. For some years Alcatraz was abandoned and in 1968 the city of S. Francisco expressed an interest in acquiring the island for development. The prospect of the prison grounds going to land redevelopment was strongly contested in a spontaneous and immediate letter-writing campaign to 'Save Alcatraz' by citizens of S. Francisco. This campaign led to the grounds being placed under the jurisdiction of the National Parks Service Department that are still currently in charge of the maintenance and tours on the island.

In November 1969 the island, its history and its future became a site of contention once again when Alcatraz was occupied initially by four Native Americans and later by ninety others who asked to purchase the island for twenty-four U.S. dollars worth of beads and red cloth, which was the same price given to a similar piece of land to Native Americans three hundred years earlier. It was the beginning of the Native American occupation of the Island, which would last until 1971 when Federal Marshals forcibly removed the last remaining occupiers from the

island. According to Adam Fortunate Eagle, one of the older members of the Bay area 'Indian' community who was involved in the occupation from its early days, amongst the plans put forth by the native Americans for the Island was an American Indian Museum which was to depict native foods and other cultural contributions given to the world as well as describing the damage caused to Native American communities by the contact with the white man: alcoholism, disease, massacres. In this plan for the Museum a part of the prison was to be kept in order to symbolize the Indians who were held captive in American jails for challenging white authority as well as to symbolize those who were imprisoned on reservations.³⁹⁸ The Museum would also especially focus on telling the story of broken treaties, of the Trail of Tears, of the massacre at Wounded Knee and many other tragic events in the history of Native American- U.S. relations.

During the occupation the Indians remained keenly aware of the history of the prison and of the bad things that had occurred in the spaces they were now occupying. For example: 'Initially food was cooked and meals were served in the prison kitchen on the upper level. Soon, however, the Indian occupiers began to feel that the spirits of former prisoners were still present in the cellblock, so the kitchen was vacated, and food preparation took place on the lower level, often in an outside area'.³⁹⁹ The Indians claimed that by their presence on the island they were somehow cleansing the space of the evil, which had been placed there by the U.S. state. In a publication written the year after the end of the occupation a group of 'Indians of all tribes' wrote: 'Alcatraz was born a mountain, surrounded by the waters of the great salt sea. By hands of hate was this island transformed into a symbol of fear and oppression. For too short a time this same island was held in trust by Indians of all tribes, who sang its praise as part of mother earth, and who cleansed the evil with the sacred tobacco'.⁴⁰⁰ In this narrative it is the U.S. state that with its 'hands of hate' had occupied the island, which used to be a mountain. The Indian occupation returned the Island briefly to its nature and cleansed the evil of the maximum-security prison with sacred tobacco. The briefly liberated Alcatraz could here also

³⁹⁸ Adam Fortunate Eagle, *Alcatraz! Alcatraz! The Indian Occupation 1969-1971*, Heyday Books, Berkeley, 1992.

³⁹⁹ From the Collection of Professor Troy Johnson California State University, Long Beach, The American Indian Occupation of Alcatraz Island, Collection 3, http://www.csulb.edu/~gcampus/libarts/am-indian/alcatraz/Collections_3.html (visited 13 August 2005).

⁴⁰⁰ Indians of all tribes, *Alcatraz Is Not An Island*, Peter Blue Cloud (ed.), Wingbow Press, Berkeley, 1972, p.13.

stand for all of America, unjustly and violently taken from the native Americans and turned into a place of fear and oppression for them.

While the National Park Services did not build a Native American Museum on the Island, or allow parts of the grounds to go to an Indian University as some of the occupiers had dreamed, they did incorporate the history of the occupation into their tours. When visitors arrive at Alcatraz they are still greeted by a graffiti that says 'Indian land' (see figure 34) and they are shown a documentary film *We Hold the Rock* describing the Indian occupation of the island, which was recently celebrating its 35th anniversary. The Parks Services has been doing research on some of the early Native American prisoners held on Alcatraz and the history of Native American oppression has been permanently though of course also innocuously reinscribed into the Island.

SANCTIFICATION

Robben Island, South Africa.

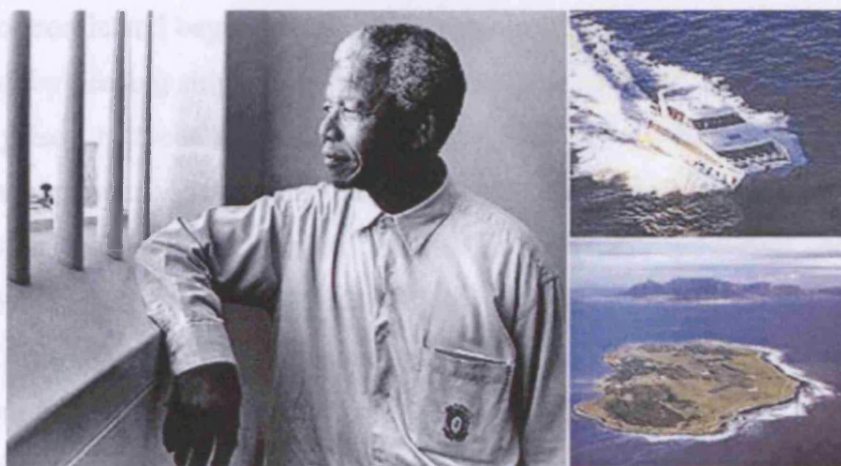


Fig.35 -Pamphlet for Robben Island with iconic image of Nelson Mandela

Unlike the previous examples, in the case of the prison at Robben Island there was very early consensus in the post-apartheid period, that the 'social, cultural and political history of the island should be protected'⁴⁰¹ and that the prison itself should form the basis of a museum.⁴⁰² In her book *History After Apartheid: Visual Culture*

⁴⁰¹ 'Executive Summary of the Robben Island Political Feasibility Study Report' in Gows, *Feasibility Study* (a survey run by Peace Visions, an independent NGO), May 1994.

⁴⁰² This does not mean that Robben Island was not a contested site, and that there were not earlier discussions about demolition and about converting the Island into a vacation resort or nature sanctuary. I will limit the discussion to the post-apartheid history of the Island when it quickly came to be seen as a symbol of the defeat of the Apartheid regime.

and *Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa* Annie Coombes provides a thorough analysis of the developments and transformations of the Robben Island Museum.⁴⁰³ She describes some of the tensions over Robben Island, its interpretation and its meaning, particularly surrounding a perceived appropriation of the Island by the ANC⁴⁰⁴ for its own self-celebration, to the exclusion of other political groups such as the PAC,⁴⁰⁵ AZAPO,⁴⁰⁶ and NEUM,⁴⁰⁷ who also had their members interned on the island and contributed to the national liberation struggle. Annie Coombes highlights the different positions of the ANC, the Cape Provincial Authority, ex-prisoners and the Anglican church, which all had a stake in the island and different aspirations for the uses and presentation of its history. The tensions over the meaning of Robben Island, however, did not concern the preservation of the prison site nor its continued existence as a heritage site, but rather whether the history of the anti-apartheid struggle should take precedence over other aspects of the prison's much longer history on the island, and about how and whether all members of the anti-apartheid struggle would be duly represented.

Robben Island began its use by Europeans as early as 1488 when it was used as a pantry by passing ships. The Dutch continued to use it as a pantry and converted it into a prison between the years 1652 and 1806. After 1806 it became a British prison for particularly dangerous criminals and it also housed people on quarantine. In 1846 it was turned into a hospital for the chronically ill, for lunatics and lepers and these patients left the island in 1931. In 1946 the Coast Artillery school and later the Marine Corps were based on the island until the Island was taken over by the prisons department in 1959. Between 1961 and 1991 it served as a maximum-security prison housing thousands of political prisoners engaged in the struggle against Apartheid.⁴⁰⁸ As the epitome of the oppression of the apartheid regime and at the same time as a symbol of the 'triumph of the human spirit against the forces of evil'⁴⁰⁹ Robben

⁴⁰³ Annie Coombes, *History After Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2003.

⁴⁰⁴ African National Congress

⁴⁰⁵ Pan African Congress

⁴⁰⁶ Azanian People's Organization

⁴⁰⁷ Non-European Unity Movement

⁴⁰⁸ The information on Robben Island's earlier history was based on Harriet Deacon, *The Essential Robben Island*, Mayibuye Books, University of Western Cape, Bellville, 1997.

⁴⁰⁹ A quote from Ahmed Kathrada's 'Opening Address' delivered 26 May 1993 in *The Robben Island Exhibition: Esiqithini*. South African Museum and Mayibuye Books, Cape Town, 1996, cited by Annie Coombes and quoted on the official Robben Island Museum website: Robben Island Museum, <http://www.robben-island.org.za/departments/directorate/directorate.asp> (visited 21 July, 2005).

Island now provides a clear example of the stage of sanctification, where the prison could embody 'the ability of the new nation to rise phoenix like from the literal ashes and debris of incarceration, death, and destruction'.⁴¹⁰

In an early exhibition curated by the South African Museum in Cape Town and the Mayibuye Center one of the curators, Patricia Davison, pointed out that 'almost inevitably Nelson Mandela became synonymous with Robben Island and symbolic of the liberation struggle. Mandela's image occurred frequently in the exhibition, too frequently some viewers suggested, but he stood not only for himself, but for all who were imprisoned on the island'.⁴¹¹ The importance of Nelson Mandela as founding father of the new South African nation, also contributes to the sacralisation of Robben Island and to its popularity as a tourist site. As Annie Coombes pointed out in her description of the tour through Robben Island, 'there is still the inevitable crowd with clicking cameras, and home videos, blocking the entrance to cell number five in B block'.⁴¹² Mandela's status as a worldwide celebrity and quintessential political prisoner makes a cult of his persona within exhibitions about Robben Island 'inevitable'.

In the foreword to *Reflections In Prison*, a Robben Island Museum publication issued in 2001, Desmond Tutu writes:

Who can forget the images in that photograph of Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and others sitting in long rows carrying out a thoroughly pointless and soul-destroying task -breaking rocks in small pieces? (...) If we do forget, we will place a very low premium on our new and hard-won freedom. We might then fail to cherish it, to nurture it and guard it as something utterly precious, bought at very great cost-not to be frittered away wantonly.⁴¹³

The grounds for cherishing the memory of Robben Island and preserving its site are not only based on the fact that political figures like Mandela and Sisulu were held there, but especially on the fact that they suffered there, and on the particular nature of their suffering in confinement. It is the useless soul-deadening work that Mandela

⁴¹⁰ Annie Coombes, *History After Apartheid*, ibid. p.69.

⁴¹¹ Patricia Davison 'A Place Apart' press release for 'Esiqithini: The Robben Island Exhibition' South African Museum in Cape Town and the Mayibuye Center, p. 3. (Cited by Annie Coombes, *History After Apartheid*, p.62)

⁴¹² Annie Coombes, *History After Apartheid*, ibid. p.79.

⁴¹³ Desmond Tutu, 'Foreword' in Mac Maharaj (ed.), *Reflections In Prison*, Zebra, Robben Island Museum, 2001, p.vii.

and Sisulu were forced to engage in, while the regime attempted to annihilate them as men, which is presented to viewers as a necessary memory, an act of moral duty.

According to Harriet Deacon:

As a positive symbol, the island is now thought of mainly as a site for the spiritual and moral regeneration of the nation. (...) At present the island is seen as a place symbolizing the triumph over Apartheid; this image is linked to a reformulation of national identity based on a particular view of modernity (represented by the discourse of 'human rights').⁴¹⁴

I shall return further in this chapter to the discourse of human rights and secular humanism as backdrops to moral arguments surrounding prison preservation. Let us simply conclude this section with the understanding that Robben Island stands as a powerful symbol for the new South African nation and as such its use as a museum serves a fundamental function of education and moral regeneration for the nation. This quasi-sacred mission goes even further than that. According to the Robben Island Museum website the museum 'strives to maintain the unique symbolism of the island, nurture creativity and innovation, and contribute to socio-economic development, the transformation of South African society and the enrichment of humanity'.⁴¹⁵ The museum thus consciously extends its lessons to the world at large.

⁴¹⁴ Harriet Deacon, *The Essential Robben Island*, Mayibuye Books, University of Western Cape, Bellville, 1997, p.20.

⁴¹⁵ See Robben Island Museum, www.robben_island.org.za/departments/heritage/heritage.asp (visited 20 July 2005)

DISCUSSION



Fig.36 -Pictures of 'the martyrs of the Martinetto' Le Nuove, 2003.

The examples provided above should help highlight the national specificities of prison memory and further strengthen my initial stress on the permeability of prison buildings. There are, however, many striking similarities between questions surrounding Le Nuove's transformation into a heritage site and those surrounding these prisons. This section will try to develop those aspects, which are most helpful to problematise and describe the battles over prison heritage and the meaning of prison memory. Given the broad range of issues and cases I shall take the liberty to move back and forth between examples rather than attempting a more systematic comparison, which would hinder the broader discussion I hope to embark on.

The starting point for this discussion is that prisons are far from obvious heritage sites and that they only reach such a status through the concerted efforts of groups that want these sites to be preserved. As homes to criminals and sites of violence, prisons are not always mourned when demolished and when preserved they carry with them very high maintenance costs, which were often behind their very decommissioning in the first place. Even when political prisoners are held there the prisons embody 'unpleasant memories' and civil divisions.

A real effort is thus needed in order to convince city and state authorities and the public at large of the need for preservation and this usually entails:

- a) Publicly imbuing the prison space with meaning through performances such as tours and memorial processions aimed at re-asserting and consolidating the space's significance, often resorting to quasi-religious imagery (martyrs, holy ground) and high power language.
- b) Identifying a broader usage for the prison beyond achieving simple memorial status, for example appealing to the importance of historical education or the usage of the prison as a symbolic site of reconciliation.
- c) Appealing for the preservation of the building on architectural grounds, which highlight its uniqueness.

The work of social agents pushing for preserving prison buildings aims at animating and reanimating prison spaces and this happens, as Annie Coombes writes: 'Only through performance' and 'performances or rituals focused around a monument are conjunctural'.⁴¹⁶ She explains that: 'the visibility of a monument is in fact entirely contingent upon the debates concerning the reinterpretation of history that takes place at moments of social and political transition'. In times of transition, be it a time of large-scale urban expansion such as the one affecting S. Francisco when Alcatraz was threatened by redevelopment, or of political changes like for the cases in Northern Ireland, South Africa and Italy, buildings can become the focus and outlet for embodying particular versions of history, which groups may wish to ensure.

In the initial stages, before official memorial practices are set in place, private memorial celebrations often operate at these sites. Thus ex IRA prisoners' asking to return to the Maze for a visit, or Nelson Mandela's highly publicized return to his cell at Robben Island after the fall of Apartheid, were performances, which began the work of memorialisation that would follow. In Le Nuove, the first 'performance' aimed at animating the building, as a site of Resistance memory was probably the plaque to the deportees placed at the entrance of the prison in 1962. It read: 'In this prison from 1922 to 1945 thousands of antiFascist Italians suffered detention. May their sacrifice not be forgotten but may the memory of the hard price that was paid to re-conquer freedom remain. ANPPIA National Association of the Politically

⁴¹⁶ Annie Coombes, *History After Apartheid. Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*, Duke University Press, London, 2003, p. 12.

Persecuted Italian AntiFascists –the city of Turin’. This plaque already produced an erasure, since it ignored those who were persecuted for their religious beliefs or family origins. Enabling a yearly return to the prison to renew the wreath and celebrate the dead also ensured a yearly re-assertion of the significance of the prison site in the struggle against nazi-fascism and began the work of sacralisation that would continue through the activities of volunteer organizations.

In choosing to ‘perform’ at the prison sites, these groups envision buildings as repositories of memory, which may be conjured up by anyone who may have an interest in restoring it to the present. Telling stories within a site, placing symbolic objects and inscriptions and imposing a set of behaviours, which induce a certain type of interpretation and feeling are all ways in which the importance of a site can be stressed and the interpretation of its significance imposed.

In Alcatraz, Robben Island and Le Nuove one of the key ways volunteers are able to inscribe their version of the past into the prison building is through the tour of the grounds of the prison. This tour opens up the prison spaces for inspection and for the imagination, leading visitors into spaces once locked up and forbidden. The primary way these tours function is through enabling identification, encouraging visitors to imagine being taken to the prison as inmates. This identification is reinforced either by the presence of ex-inmates who describe their experiences of prison life (as happens at Robben Island and in Le Nuove) or through a physical re-enactment such as encouraging inmates to be locked in a prison cell for a few minutes (as happens at Alcatraz and to some extent in Le Nuove).

In Alcatraz the identification with inmates functions by acting upon a very elaborate and widespread fantasy of the inexpugnable prison as a place of mystery, horror, and adventure and thus the tours at Alcatraz present a very different case than those in prisons where political prisoners were once held. Elements of the Alcatraz fantasy, however, are clearly present in other prison tours as well, where voyeurism, morbid curiosity, and subconscious fears and desires associated with the prison imaginary probably play a part in the motivations of thousands of visiting tourists.

The tour in Le Nuove, like the tour at Robben Island, is rather conceived of as a moral pilgrimage and this tour is framed quite explicitly in terms of enlightenment and redemption through knowledge. The physical experience of the site is assumed to testify to the violence and horrors experienced by hundreds of

prisoners in earlier years, even though visitors are only touring an empty shell, a sanitized version of the place, from which they know they can escape at any time. This re-narrativization in the empty space, nevertheless 'is essential to memory' as Marita Sturken has pointed out 'it is its defining quality',⁴¹⁷ as the re-telling of the story also reshapes it in terms of a heroic struggle as opposed to raw and aimless violence. When violence is too extreme and a conciliatory narrative does not emerge to make up for the 'bad things' that occurred within a prison's walls, then it is most likely that its fate will resemble that of Carandiru.

Not only are visitors who are led through these buildings supposed to absorb the lessons of the past and learn about the suffering of those interned, but by the very act of visiting the building they are seen as performing an act of memory, paying their respects to those who suffered and died in that place. Like in Susanne Brandt's discussion of museums and exhibitions of the First World War, these prisons-turned-museums are perceived by those running them primarily as memorials.⁴¹⁸ And it is as memorials that their destruction would appear sacrilegious.

At Robben Island, the Maze/Long Kesh and Le Nuove the notion of suffering lies at the core of the moral assertion of the sacredness of the building. These sites ought not to have been preserved per se, but because they are the last remaining symbols of the very specific heroic suffering the buildings partially contributed to through their architecture and through the system of power such architecture symbolized. It is the suffering and tragic death of Bobby Sands, the painful isolation and senseless humiliation of Mandela, and the sleepless nights and tortured bodies of the Turinese resistance fighters, which are seen as truly justifying the preservation of these prisons in the eyes of their defenders.

In all the prisons mentioned above that managed or are in the early stages of being turned into museums the prison building is supposed to remain untouched, and visitors are to see it empty and run down. Part of the experience evoked and provided by the tour rests on a certain aestheticisation of the ruin, and on producing

⁴¹⁷ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories, the Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic and the Politics of Remembering*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997, p.42. In this passage she discusses Freud's concept of secondary revision, 'the process by which a subject revises and renarrativizes a dream or memory in order to give it coherence, he was referring to the way in which memories are continuously rewritten and transformed over time until they bear little resemblance to the initial experience'.

⁴¹⁸ Susanne Brandt, 'The Memory Makers: Museums and Exhibitions of the First World War', *History & Memory*, vol.6 (1994), no.1, p.107.

an atmospheric environment, which constitutes a unique retelling of the events, which once occurred in the site. As I already pointed out when talking about Tagliente's reflections on Le Nuove, this retelling is symbolic and plays on haunting, emptiness and on minimal narration so that the mind of the visitor may fill in the gaps by his or her own emotional responses to the place, carefully guided by the ex prisoner guides who by their presence ensure that the mood towards the site will be solemn.

The suffering celebrated by the tour is to be understood through exposure to the physical remnants of the prison, and it is to be 'experienced' rather than learned. In this sense the tours through the prisons reinforce David Lowenthal's notion that 'history and heritage carve out unlike and often competing insights. 'We are not here to teach history, to do the teacher's work'- Lowenthal quotes a guide at an Israeli settlement museum-'let them learn history at school, we are here for the experience!'⁴¹⁹ At the end of this 'experience' the volunteers and curators of these prison museums presume and hope there will be some form of collective healing and experiential memory.

In their efforts at convincing visitors and the outside world of the innate value of their prison, volunteers attempt to connect the site with existing grand narratives which may help frame the site as instrumental for the state. Thus Mike Ritchie, the director of Coiste na n'Iarchimí (the national network for Republican ex prisoners), said at a conference that 'establishing a museum' at the Maze/Long Kesh 'would facilitate dialogue, understanding and healing';⁴²⁰ The volunteers at Robben Island talk about 'heroic endurance in the face of adversity and the triumph of the human spirit over evil'; and in Alcatraz including the Native American Indian uprising in the history of the prison feeds into politically correct narratives and new age belated sympathies for the plight of Native Americans.

In Le Nuove, volunteers insist on connecting the prison with narratives of sacrifice and liberation, to the 'civic religion of the resistance',⁴²¹ still cultivated formally by the official representatives of the Italian state, from the President of the

⁴¹⁹ David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p.168 (quoting from Tamar Katriel, 'Remaking place: cultural production in an Israeli pioneer settlement museum', *History & Memory*, vol.5 (1993) no.2, p.109).

⁴²⁰ Conference proceedings, 'A Museum at Long Kesh or the Maze?' www.coiste.iela_museum_at_long_kesh_or_the_maz.htm (visited July 30, 2005).

⁴²¹ On this topic see Stephen Gundle, 'The "Civic Religion" of the Resistance in Post-War Italy', *Modern Italy*, vol.5 (2000) no.2, pp.113-132.

Republic to lower representatives such as the mayor of Turin. They choose in particular a version of the Resistance myth in which resistance fighters are divested of their party affiliations and presented as united together and with members of the Catholic Church such as Padre Ruggero. The resistance fighters are presented as having died for a Second Risorgimento, so that a new Italy could rise again. Claudio Pavone has written extensively on this use of the idea of the Second Risorgimento and has shown that such a notion was far from universally accepted⁴²² and that it transformed radically over time. By insisting on holding on to an outmoded version of the resistance myth at a time in which the history of the Resistance is being challenged from the right, the group may fail to convince the public of the prison's universal value, though its strategies for claiming that value are very similar to the strategies of other sites which insist on notions of sacrifice and suffering.

HERITAGE, SUFFERING AND PITY



Fig.37 -Underground cell in Le Nuove, where visitors are told about the partisan who wrote in his blood 'better to die than to betray'.

It is possible to identify a new development in conceptions of cultural heritage beginning in the second half of the last century. In the wake of events of catastrophic proportions and of civilian deaths on a scale never imagined before, the very sites where these tragedies unfolded started to be preserved and visited as memorials in their own right. They were at once evidence of mass murder and at the same time the only site where relatives could convene to mourn their dead whose

⁴²² See for example Claudio Pavone, *Alle origini della Repubblica- scritti su fascismo, antifascismo e continuità dello stato*, Bollati Boringhieri, Turin, 1995, pp. 3-66.

bodies were no longer available to them for burial. Tours started to be carried out on these grounds and museums were added onto the sites to complement the tours.

While the practice of visiting sites of tragic historical importance was not new to the twentieth century (finding precedence as far back as in pilgrimages to sites of Christian martyrdom or in the popular visits to civil war battlefields in the United States in the second half of the 19th century) the practice of preserving sites 'as they were' and often covering a large geographical area, was a new development. This practice became increasingly popular as the twentieth century drew to a close and as sites of memory became more and more numerous.⁴²³ This trend could be explained at once in relation to anxieties about providing evidence of horrors perhaps too great to fathom and thus potentially denied, and by a post-modern discomfort with grand narratives and figurative representation.⁴²⁴ In the face of such extreme horror a sculpted monument could no longer satisfy the needs for mourning and thus the sites themselves, left bare and empty to speak for themselves, took on the function of providing catharsis, pedagogical lessons and possibly closure.⁴²⁵

With the rise of secular humanism and discourses of human rights in the years following the Second World War, being aware of and remembering suffering was increasingly presented as a moral duty in public discourse, and thus visits to sites such as the Death Camps at Auschwitz or the Peace Park in Hiroshima became part of school curricula and were seen as educational and fruitful for cultivating a sense of humanity. Places of suffering left to speak for themselves were the most powerful means of conveying a sense of historical memory and triggering an emotional response to those horrors.

⁴²³ The preservation of the bodies in the exact position they were found at a technical school in Rwanda now turned into an informal museum of the killing of Tutsis is one example amongst many. See Marc Lacey '10 Years Later in Rwanda, the Dead Are Ever Present', The New York Times, 26 February 2004.

⁴²⁴ See for example: James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1993.

⁴²⁵ Jay Winter has written about the function of monuments and sites of mourning following the First World War: *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning. The Great War in European Cultural History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995. On p.9 he says that 'The Second World War helped to put an end to the rich set of traditional languages of commemoration and mourning which flourished after the Great War. Before 1939, before the Death Camps, and the thermonuclear cloud, most men and women were still able to reach back into their 'traditional' cultural heritage to express amazement and anger, bewilderment and compassion, in the face of war and the losses it brought in its wake', suggesting that this was no longer possible after the Second World War.

Carolyn Dean has written about the challenge that the Holocaust has posed to the concept of universal empathy and about the rhetoric that human rights' groups and governments have used to fight 'numbness' and call upon our collective humanity since the end of the Second World War.⁴²⁶ She has explored the forms that anxiety about 'numbness' has taken in the post-war years and some of the dangers implied in the transfer of a bystander role onto larger and larger groups as a way to mobilize empathy and spur political action. To examine the transformations of the concept of 'humanity' and its link to 'empathy' or 'pity' would require a separate study. I can only hint at its significance. We find, for example, that Luc Boltanski, in his book *Distant Suffering*, has highlighted how this idea of a humanity sharpened by pity was a concept already present at the time of Hobbes but that the information era has started to place ever increasing demands on our humanity. He writes:

It is only when individuals are 'humane' in the sense of full of 'humanity' for fellow human beings, that they manifest and realize their full membership of 'the human kind.' It is in the presence of suffering that this full humanity manifests itself in pity. The spectacle of suffering is therefore the test individuals must face in order to prove their humanity.⁴²⁷

The emptied out sites of horror, preserved as heritage, provide a spectacle of suffering presented so as to sharpen visitors' humanity. Museums such as the Holocaust Museum in Washington and many of the museums that are born to complement the sites themselves aim at providing a similar impetus towards historical empathy and nurturing a collective humanity. With increased access to information about suffering all around the world, however, the demands for empathy and pity are ever increasing and with them a need to symbolically cope with tragedies. At the same time, according to Andreas Huyssen, we are facing an over-proliferation of memorial sites and museums, which place an increased burden of empathy onto our sense of the past as well as of the present.⁴²⁸ A new form of tourism of a moral kind has been emerging which feeds on this demand for

⁴²⁶ Carolyn Dean, *The Fragility of Empathy After the Holocaust*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2004.

⁴²⁷ Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering. Morality, Media and Politics*, Graham Burchell trans., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p.99.

⁴²⁸ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts. Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2003 or *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, Routledge, London, 1995.

knowledge of suffering and redress, and the number of heritage sites protected on the basis of suffering has thus been increasing.

In his book *Victims and Values. A History and Theory of Suffering*, Joseph Amato writes that: 'Invariably caught up in the contradictions of modern sensibility, the modern commitment to openness, and the modern world's flood of universal information, we find victims are too numerous either to love or to forget'.⁴²⁹ This contradiction becomes particularly evident when it comes to the question of prisons and heritage. Prisons are all fundamentally places of suffering though only political prisoners are comfortably seen as victims.

Within the context of an over proliferation of heritage sites preserved on the basis that 'bad things' of historical importance occurred there, the question of how historical importance is defined and which victims we extend our empathy to becomes crucial. At the moment it is prison sites that manage to declare themselves sacred ground, which manage to achieve heritage status. Death, and the presence of martyrs and heroes suffering under horrific conditions make a ground sacred and thus worthy. Political prisoners suffering and dying for their cause are seen to imbue a prison with a special value. As the booklet for Dublin's old prison Kilmainham Gaol reads: 'just as men and women can be made into heroes through their imprisonment, so can their place of confinement be exalted by their presence. In this way mere places of detention for criminals are transformed into powerful symbols of political freedom'.⁴³⁰ Yet this hierarchy of victims is not articulated explicitly in conceptions of heritage, just as the notion of sacred ground only lies implicitly and uncomfortably within a secular humanist framework for heritage conception.

Where do we draw the line? Whose suffering is worth remembering and why? What actions are awful enough to be recorded in the black book of posterity? Which victims must we empathize with? In Joseph Amato's words, which should we love? Which shall we forget? Once heritage shifted from preserving heroic sites to also preserving tragic sites on the basis of suffering does this not imply that we have a responsibility to remember all victims? And if such an idea seems absurd and

⁴²⁹ Joseph Amato, *Victims and Values. A History and Theory of Suffering*, Greenwood Press, New York, 1990, p.177.

⁴³⁰ Department of Arts, Heritage Gaeltacht and the Islands, *A History of Kilmainham Gaol*, Duchas, 1995, p.2.

distasteful does this not require a framework of discussion, an explicit articulation of whose suffering is important and why?

It is a lack of a clear and explicit discussion about these approaches that makes the struggle over the future of Le Nuove so contentious. Insisting on notions of suffering and on using the prison space itself as an indicator of this suffering opens the prison up to 'dangerous' readings. It does so by exposing the suffering of all inmates (including thieves, rapists and terrorists) through the architecture, by eliciting empathy and identifications through the tour, which go beyond those intended by the guides, and by indirectly producing notions of the state as perpetrator of violence and oppression. As much as *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola* may ignore those other histories and insist on celebrating and commemorating its own heroic victims, the building which stands empty and menacing, engulfs too many histories for comfort.

What to do with the histories of the terrorists beaten and tortured during the 1970s? What to make of the Southern Italian guards who died under the prison walls or outside their homes partially because they were given no real protection by the state? How to remember the thousands of days men had to lie down in dirty cots full of parasites because their cells were so packed with inmates there was no room for them to stand? How to remember those who cut themselves or chose to escape the pain of prison by hanging themselves? These are not edifying stories, they do not produce closure or catharsis or a reassuring sense of community and humanity, yet they are stories of suffering nonetheless. They expose the wounds still bleeding in the city, the divisions tearing the country apart, be they political, territorial or financial. Andreas Huyssen has written that: 'if we are indeed suffering from a surfeit of memory, we do need to make an effort to distinguish usable pasts from disposable pasts';⁴³¹ but how do we comfortably decide that prison pasts are disposable pasts? This project has tried to bring some of these disposable pasts out through the voices of those who lived through them. Whether the city will choose to include them in its heritage has yet to be seen, after all, as David Lowenthal has written 'only heritage that is clearly ours is worth protecting' and after the old resistance fighters die, there will be very few people left to claim Le Nuove's past as their own.

⁴³¹ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, *ibid.*, p.29.

CONCLUSION

This chapter began with a detailed description of a tour of Le Nuove, based on a visit that took place on 15 November 2004. This description was meant to help envision and frame the types of memory re-inscription taking place at Le Nuove as well as to begin to highlight some of their weaknesses and erasures.

The chapter then discussed the volunteer organization *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola* and its work in the prison. It considered the organization's particular interpretation of the relationship between memory and place and showed how the group uses the haunting emptiness of the prison to produce an emotional response in visitors so as to make them 'involved in mankind' and to strengthen their humanity. The sense that the building site itself is crucial to memory transmission precisely due to its physical structure and appearance is central to the group's mission of ensuring the building's preservation as a permanent heritage site for the city.

The chapter then moved on to a broader discussion of the particular problems, which emerge in the process of transforming prisons into heritage sites. Given that prisons generally contain unpleasant memories as well as traumatic memories for individuals and uncomfortable ones for the state, their transformation into heritage is not obvious and involves the active involvement of pressure groups. There are various memorial strategies that emerge in response to prison sites. These memorial strategies were highlighted by Tina Loo and Carolyn Strange in their article on *Alcatraz Island and the American Imagination* and they are the following: obliteration, designation, rectification and sanctification. As examples of each of these stages the chapter discussed: the Brazilian prison at Carandiru in São Paulo, the Northern Ireland prison The Maze/Long Kesh near Kilburn, the American prison Alcatraz in S. Francisco, and the South African Prison at Robben Island. Each case was briefly contextualised in light of the particularities of place and history affecting its meaning and was then used to draw broader considerations on the shapes that memory re-inscription takes in prison sites more generally. Le Nuove seems caught between each of these stages of memorialisation and considering the fates of these other sites was meant to help frame the efforts taking place towards Le Nuove's transformation within a global prison museum context.

The chapter drew parallels in the ways performances such as symbolic returns, memorial celebrations and the active re-inscription of meaning into prison

spaces through tours run by ex prisoners, are used to ensure particular readings of these sites. It showed how groups interested in the preservation of the sites at Robben Island, The Maze and Le Nuove, stress their universal value and link their usage to already existing grand narratives while arguing for their practical use as educational sites. It considered how the emptied out buildings are seen as essential to that educational/experiential process. Visiting these sites becomes a moral pilgrimage and an act of memory since these sites are framed primarily as places of suffering.

The chapter ended with a broader discussion of how the practice of preserving in their entirety tragic sites such as the concentration camps of the Second World War has become increasingly common and extended to other 'bad places' such as prisons, since the second half of the twentieth century. It considered the assumption that exposure to these physical sites of suffering is meant to sharpen visitor's humanity and the problems this assumption entails when seen in light of a dramatic boom of information about suffering in the present, paralleled by a boom of memorialisation of places of suffering from the past. In the battle for heritage based on suffering, it is only those sites, which manage to transform themselves into sacred ground by producing an emotional response in visitors, which manage to achieve heritage status. Generally this sacralisation focuses visitor empathy towards political prisoners; yet preserving sites like Le Nuove *as is*, also calls for extending that empathy to the hundreds of others who spent their lives within the prison's damp and cold walls. The chapter ended by calling for an awareness that our existing practices of heritage formation based on suffering do not (and perhaps cannot?) do justice to the varying forms that suffering has taken in the past and fail to articulate explicitly our choices and criteria for deciding which pasts require our symbolic rectification through memorialisation in the future.

THE OUTER WALLS

CHAPTER SEVEN



and the street is clear. Seven years ago, however, a demonstration right below these walls challenged that view and brought to light the extent to which Le Pen's may still coexist with deeply dangerous meanings for the city.

In 1998 a court case brought attention down the city's spine from the depths of the 1970s,⁴⁰⁰ according to Fabrizio Ravalli, a journalist reporting at the time. Three young environmentalists, called 'eco-terrorists' by the press and then 'a-journers' for living in occupied housing, were accused of forming an armed band and placing explosives along the construction sites of the high-speed train line being set up in Val di Susa, a valley between France and Italy, just west of Turin. The high-speed train line threatened many wild habitats and it was also predicted to cause

⁴⁰⁰ Fabrizio Ravalli, 'Giovani e natura vive l'occupazione ed all'orda di destra che l'ha uccisa', *La Stampa*, 1 April 1998.

THE OUTER WALLS



Fig.38 –Carmagnola treasure hunt entry 28, Le Nuove circa 1960

On a Sunday morning Corso Vittorio is deserted. I reach Le Nuove on foot, walking over plastic cones set to redirect the traffic while the works for the 2006 winter Olympics are tearing the street apart. The sky is madonna blue, the air crisp and cold, and the last yellow leaves on the boulevard trees rustle in the wind. When my father was a teenager, living in the small provincial town of Carmagnola, outside Turin, he and his friends participated in a treasure hunt, which involved taking a picture of themselves in front of Le Nuove. I stand in the exact spot in which they nervously smiled back at the camera, pretending to imitate protesting prisoners by banging on metal pots with spoons, thrilled by the danger of the forbidden activity; today there is nothing to intimidate me there. Le Nuove is, after all, just an old innocuous building and the street is clear. Seven years ago, however, a demonstration right below these walls challenged that view and brought to light the extent to which Le Nuove may still contain and embody dangerous meanings for the city.

In 1998 a court case brought: 'tremors down the city's spine from the depth of the 1970s',⁴³² according to Fabrizio Ravelli, a journalist reporting at the time. Three young environmentalists- called 'eco-terrorists' by the press and then 'squatters' for living in occupied housing- were accused of forming an armed band and placing explosives along the construction sites of the high speed train line being set up in Val di Susa, a valley between France and Italy, just west of Turin. The high-speed train line threatened many wild habitats and it was also predicted to cause

⁴³² Fabrizio Ravelli, 'Edoardo è ancora vivo i morti siete voi...il grido di rabbia dei 'marginali'', *La Stampa*, 1 April 1998.

severe noise pollution and potential environmental catastrophes from land erosion, asbestos pollution, and hydraulic problems derived from moving the course of a mountain river.⁴³³ The press demonised the 'squatters' and for days on end their pictures were displayed on the front pages of all the newspapers, with sensationalised speculations about them. In the wake of all the media attention and of an unfavourable court decision Edoardo Massari, one of the 'squatters', hanged himself in his prison cell in the new prison Le Vallette, at the outskirts of the city.⁴³⁴ Later his girlfriend, Maria Soledad, an Argentinean woman known as Sole-sun- who also stood accused of 'eco-terrorism', hanged herself in her home where she was on house arrest.

At Edoardo Massari's funeral 'squatters' clashed with journalists who had insisted on attending; one journalist was badly beaten and strong threatening language was used against journalists and judges on the anarchist radio station Radio Black Out at the eve of the demonstration in response to Massari's death.⁴³⁵ In the eyes of the press this was a clear sign that terrorism and destruction were returning to Turin and there were explicit references to the return of the *anni di piombo* and to the targeted violence, intimidation and solidarity with prisoners typical of that time.⁴³⁶

⁴³³ In recent days the protests against the TAV (the high speed train line in Val di Susa) have escalated again. Another symbolic bomb was placed in early November by a group allegedly called 'Valsusa Rossa', which repeated the scare of years earlier. A large movement of local protesters, including families and old villagers, have been occupying and blocking construction sites to the tunnel. Their reasons for the protest were listed by: Repubblica.it "cronaca" Ambientali, Storiche, Economiche, ecco le ragioni dei "no tav", <http://www.repubblica.it/2005/j/sezioni/cronaca/tavtolione/schedtav/schedtav.html> (visited 11 December 2005). On 8 December 30.000 people demonstrated in Val di Susa and the police conducted a blitz during the night with several incidents of violence were reported: Repubblica.it "cronaca" Tav, area Venaus sotto sequestro il Pm l'affida a imprese costruttrici <http://www.repubblica.it/2005/l/sezioni/cronaca/tav2/intmagi/intmagi.html> (visited 11 December 2005) Repubblica.it "cronaca" val di Susa, scontri e proteste e Pisanu dice "nessuna carica" <http://www.repubblica.it/2005/l/sezioni/cronaca/tav2/tav2/tav2.html> (visited 11 December 2005).

⁴³⁴ See: Paolo Griseri, 'Morte in Carcere. Edoardo Massari, trentacinque anni, era stato arrestato il 5 marzo con l'accusa di "ecoterrorismo", per alcuni reati minori legati agli attentati ai cantieri dell'alta velocità in val di Susa. Gli ultimi a visitarlo lo avevano trovato in piena depressione', *Il Manifesto*, 29 March 1998.

⁴³⁵ P.V. 'Giornalisti aggrediti ai funerali dello squatter suicida. Un reporter locale e collaboratore dell'Ansa ferito in modo serio da una decina di anarchici che lo hanno pestato a pugni e calci anche quando era a terra', *Il Corriere della Sera*, 1 April 1998.

⁴³⁶ See for example Gad Lerner, "'Noi portavoce della periferia esclusa"-viaggio al centro della rabbia. A Torino, una notte nei centri sociali: anarchia, musica e poi le incursioni in cerca di nemici', *La Repubblica*, 2 April 1998; Paolo Griseri, 'Torino la città è sotto choc. Ma c'è chi cerca un confronto. Chi trova un nemico trova un tesoro', *Luna Nuova*, 31 March 1998; Marina Cassi e Claudio Giacchino, 'Assurda questa resa ai violenti. Paura per i petardi lanciati tra le bancarelle del mercato, 3 persone portate in ospedale. L'ira della gente: Castellani chi paga i danni?', *La Stampa*, 5 April 1998. See also: Carlo Chianura, 'Non sono come le BR ma quella violenza...', *La Repubblica*, 5 April 1998.

The speed with which the *anni di piombo* were re-evoked in the discussion of the young environmentalists' case, was an indication of just how unresolved and threatening that time still was, an unsettled scar which could still easily start to bleed. As a journalist commented at the time, the expression of anger aired on Radio Black Out, in which judges and journalists were accused of the death of Edoardo Massari and threatened with violence, only confirmed the 'symbolic universe of the Turin that is afraid, just like in Curcio's time'.⁴³⁷ This continued fear, a fear of the new but also a continuation of the fear that went before, was symbolically exposed and played with during a demonstration that took place in the space between Le Nuove and the new courthouse built across the street.

Demonstrations in Turin do not normally stop in front of Le Nuove, but the demonstration, which took place after Edoardo Massari's death on 5 April 1998, was arranged so that Le Nuove and the new courthouse were to be a focal point of the gathering. Demonstrators clearly chose that part of the city as a highly charged symbolic space upon which to enact their protest. Perhaps feeding on the connections drawn by the press between their own movement and the violent street movements of the late 1970s, protesters might have realized the power of the space of Le Nuove as a dangerous site, embodying a threat from the past, whether real or imagined.

At the demonstration protesters and the police clashed at the intersection in front of Le Nuove. Demonstrators pelleted the old prison with paint balls, and threw stones at the courthouse across the street, almost completely shattering its new windows and costing the city millions of lire. A few days later on one of the side walls of Le Nuove a spray painted inscription read 'tutte le carceri salteranno in aria, l'unica giustizia e' quella proletaria'-all prisons will explode, the only justice is proletarian justice.

Antze and Lambek argue that 'To remember is to perform an act of commemoration, of testimony, of confession, of accusation'.⁴³⁸ Hallam and Hockey take this further and say that: 'As a practice of performance such acts locate individuals both temporally and spatially in relation to that which is otherwise set apart from the immediacies of here and now. Memory practices forge connections and have significant social repercussions. Therein lies their power, one that can

⁴³⁷ Paolo Griseri, 'Torino la città è sotto choc. Ma c'è chi cerca un confronto. Chi trova un nemico trova un tesoro', *Luna Nuova*, 31 March 1998.

⁴³⁸ Paul Antze and Michael Lambek, *Tense Past- Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, Routledge, London, 1996, p.xxv.

constitute both a resource and a threat'.⁴³⁹ Throwing stones at the courthouse and paint balls at the prison, in the tense context of suspicion and rage in the immediate aftermath of the young 'squatters' death, was not only an act of protest in the present but a symbolic and dangerous return to the past. A past in which the infrangible glass on the walls of Le Nuove (echoed in the architecture of the glass and brick structure of the new courthouse) had to be set up because guards on the turrets were being shot at from the street. The bullets wedged in Le Nuove's glass protection in the late 1970s were the marker of a shift in tactics for certain branches of the Italian radical left from passive resistance to a much more dangerous and violent phase. The newspapers and politicians of 1998 had expected and projected a similar potential development onto the 'squatters', who were feared to transform and channel their urban malaise into advanced and organized criminality, as the 'eco-terrorists' supposedly had done.⁴⁴⁰ The rocks onto the courthouse and paint on Le Nuove signalled a playful response to these expectations by a theatrical re-enactment. They also constituted an affirmation of 1990s anarchist forms of protest, focused on property and on symbolic damages. By this act protesters separated themselves from their supposed predecessors while also gaining power from the fearful associations they evoked.

The spray painted sign on the walls of Le Nuove, echoing the cries of protesters from the street as the prison exploded in riots back in the 1970s, was a ghostly revenant in the urban landscape. While it reverberated in anachronism, with the word 'proletarian' largely out of place in the discourses of 1990s young people, it felt powerful enough to express a deeper rage at the death of the young environmentalist. It was as though the cries from the past, which I discussed in Chapter Four, had been lingering outside Le Nuove's walls just waiting to be written in spray paint. The new inscription did not cry out for revolution as the previous cries had done, however; it was an angry cry for a fellow activist and friend. Edoardo, who

⁴³⁹ Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey, *Death, Memory and Material Culture*, Oxford, Berg, 2001, p. 181.

⁴⁴⁰ See article by D. Mart, 'Il governo cerca di stemperare la tensione in vista della manifestazione prevista per domani pomeriggio a Torino. Napolitano: non vieto il corte. Scontri a Bologna', *Il Corriere della Sera*, 3 April 1998 where the minister of the interior was quoted as saying that 'to forbid the demonstration would mean, as the experience of the past teaches us, triggering a very dangerous counterposition'. See also: Giorgio Bocca, 'Il ritorno della violenza', *La Repubblica*, 3 April 1998. In this article Giorgio Bocca comments on the fact that the 'squatters' were strikingly apolitical, something which distinguished them from their predecessors whom he implicitly identifies in the violent forces of Prima Linea and the Red Brigades who also targeted journalists. His title 'the return of violence' suggests this link more explicitly.

hanged himself with a sheet in the silence of the night, was one of the many victims of the deadly pressure of the prison, whose walls can weigh down on the minds and bodies of inmates, as I discussed in Chapter Two. Although Edoardo Massari hanged himself in his cell in Le Vallette, Le Nuove served as a signifier of Le Vallette, as well as, perhaps, of all prisons.⁴⁴¹ As a theatre upon which to challenge the city with dangerous meanings, the space in front of Le Nuove was not only linked to the ghosts of the 1970s coming back to haunt it with their unresolved pain and division. It encompassed all the ghosts of prison, of failed justice, of suicide, of the violence and brutality of the state played on the individual.

At the demonstration the protesters carried a large banner, which read: 'Assassini'-murderers. This giant black inscription served as an accusation, holding an unspecified and extended group responsible for the death by suicide of the young environmentalist. The sign denounced the violence of the judicial system and of prison, seen as innately deadly and violent. The sign was also a menace in the context of a demonstration where violence was widely anticipated.



Fig.39 -'squatter' demonstration, Turin, 5 April 1998

The demonstrators in fact suggested that, just by detaining Massari, the prison authorities had become perpetrators, responsible for the young man's death and they, as well as the army of policemen stretched out to halt their violence, were thus the focus of their anger. As a menace, the black sign 'Assassini' also evokes the black

⁴⁴¹ This link between Le Nuove and Le Vallette was stressed so convincingly that a journalist reporting on the demonstration confused the two buildings. See 'La Città ha vissuto una giornata da incubo e si è risvegliata solamente quando la manifestazione è terminata. Torino blindata, la grande paura è passata. Negozi chiusi, la gente barricata in casa. Napolitano: nulla di drammatico. Radio Black Out: giornata tranquilla e pacifica come volevamo che fosse', *Il Corriere della Sera*, 5 April 2005.

graffiti found on the prison walls in the 1970s, calling for killing guards who were seen as executioners, and it exposes once more the ambiguity of prison violence and victimization that I tried to highlight in Chapter Three. The sign, in fact, was held right in front of the turret where there is a marble plaque dedicated to two policemen, who were assassinated by the Red Brigades while on duty outside the prison walls.

The plaque to the assassinated policemen looks like a tombstone. Plastic flowers covered in dust and pollution give it the look of some of the neglected graves at the edge of city cemeteries, or of the ephemeral monuments to traffic victims sometimes left on the side of highways. It reads: 'At dawn of December 1978



Fig.40-plaque to Lanza and Porceddu.

Salvatore Lanza and Salvatore Porceddu, guards of the state police, fell victim to barbarity while they kept watch in defence of the democratic order. Turin will not forget their sacrifice'. By bringing the sign 'Assassini' in front of that plaque, the demonstrators were unknowingly reinscribing onto the building the tensions implicit in *Le Nuove* exactly twenty years earlier, when 'terrorists' and prison and state authorities were at once victims and victimizers. The policemen had been killed precisely as symbols and as

belonging to a general category of 'assassini' held accountable as individuals for all the repression of the state, the killing of students at demonstrations, and the violence in prisons. At the same time, just like Lorusso and Cotugno whose deaths I discussed in Chapter Three, these two young men who had just recently arrived from Sicily and Sardinia were mourned by their families as innocent individuals, and they were heralded as victims by city authorities, their lives cut short by 'barbarity'.

Despite much fuss in the newspapers and all the fears and expectations projected on the demonstration,⁴⁴² the only victims of the protest were the glass windows of the new courthouse.⁴⁴³ There were minimal skirmishes between

⁴⁴² See for example the article: 'Corteo Squatter la paura ultimo invitato attesi oggi a Torino giovani da tutta Italia e dall'estero. Mobilitati oltre a 100 tra carabinieri e poliziotti. Veltroni: giusto autorizzarlo. L'opposizione contesta la scelta', *La Stampa*, 4 April 1998.

⁴⁴³ See also 'Nel mirino dei manifestanti soprattutto il Palagiustizia: distrutte centinaia di vetrate. Sassairole, ma nessuno scontro al corteo con 5000 squatter', *La Stampa*, 5 April 1998.

demonstrators and police, no more than at any normal demonstration, and the much-anticipated violence never arrived.⁴⁴⁴ The ‘squatter’ case was soon forgotten and silence returned to the intersection in front of Le Nuove. The real prison, where the tragic death of the young environmentalist had taken place, was miles away from the city centre, in the cement and wire multi-complex at Le Vallette, too far and protected for any memorial to the young man to be erected, and so camouflaged in the landscape at the periphery, as to look like a massive housing complex. Quite difficult to reach by public transportation and consisting entirely of grey cement structures, Le Vallette is tragically emblematic of precisely the sorts of urban malaise and alienation attributed to the ‘squatters’. It has its own complex history, linked to other myths of bomb plots and mafia embezzlements, of fires and walls already leaking when it first opened, but that is material for another project.

Neil Harris, in *Building Lives: Constructing Rites and Passages*, asks: ‘How long should a building live? Does it have, or does the larger community possess, certain rights to its survival? Do certain building types merit longer lives than others?’⁴⁴⁵ Le Nuove is dying. Certainly its time as a prison has passed and it has entered a new phase of transformation and renewal whose final outcome is still uncertain. Although *Nessun Uomo E’ Un’Isola* claims Le Nuove’s right to life on moral grounds, it is unclear whether they in fact have any rights to its long term survival. According to Neil Harris ‘examining buildings through their life stages and modes of representation encourages us to conceive of them not simply as places but as sets of events, affixing a temporal dimension to their existence that is not simply an add-on but fundamental to their nature’.⁴⁴⁶ This project has tried to examine the multiple temporalities and meanings brought out through stories in and about the prison, to produce a topography of memory for Le Nuove. This written journey constitutes an imaginary map of a place as it exists in memory as well as in myth, not as a static place but as an assemblage of events, which are continuously transformed by and for the present. The demonstration, which took place in 1998 at Le Nuove, for example, was one re-inscription of memory onto the prison space, at once a gesture

⁴⁴⁴ See for example: Orsola Casagrande and Pierluigi Sullo ‘Tutti insieme ma da soli. Ore 14. Il corteo si muove verso lo scontro che non c’è’, *Il Manifesto*, 5 April 1998.

⁴⁴⁵ Neil Harris, *Building Lives: Constructing Rites and Passages*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1999, p.117.

⁴⁴⁶ Neil Harris, *Building Lives*, *ibid.*, p.164.

in the present and an act of memory partially directed by forces and unresolved tensions from the past. These re-articulated memories are sometimes contradictory, threatening and powerful, and they always reflect the needs of the present.

The anger of the demonstrators in 1998, calling out to 'blow up all prisons', echoing an earlier call from the past, saw the prison radically differently than the group *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola*, which would call for its conservation three years later. Both groups, however, engaged in performances, which kept Le Nuove alive in the present either as a hated place to be attacked and demolished, or as a sacred space to be preserved and revered. As Annie Coombes and others have suggested, and as I discussed in Chapter Six, it is through performance that cultural memory is produced and elaborated. The continued physical existence of the building, however, does not necessarily ensure that memory re-inscriptions shall continue there or be received by those who don't have a vested interest in knowing about them. On my first visit to Le Nuove, for example, I tried to reach the building by tram and asked the driver, whose tram passed Le Nuove every day, to let me know when we had reached the building. After the tram turned off Corso Vittorio I realized that the driver had no idea where Le Nuove was and that he was probably waiting to direct me to Le Vallette. As an active search for and assemblage of stories about Le Nuove's past, drawn from those who worked, suffered, and lived there, the project is my own particular re-inscription and re-narrativization. I intend for it to be a sort of collective death song for Le Nuove as prison, a *kaddish* whose lyrics were written long ago but which takes on its particular resonance from the mourning voices who feel a need to sing it in the present, against the silence and indifference of the city.

But let us turn to the building one last time. The gate is locked and it will be a few more minutes before the mass in the church is over. The church is the only part of the prison still serving its original function (at least until the old administrative offices open again). I wait outside. Then I hear them coming, voices speaking Piedmontese, whispering, laughing. The mechanical door opens and I watch them come out one by one, the 'friends of Padre Ruggero Cipolla', a driving force in the organization *Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola*. As they emerge from the building many of them reach out for each other, some to shake hands, others to hold on to an arm for support as they walk away on uncertain legs. When they have gone, I slip into the

building leaving the door half open behind me. Orazio will follow very soon with the afternoon tour, and he will lock up.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1

ARMED GROUPS CITED

BRIGATE ROSSE- Red Brigades

Conceived in 1969 by Renato Curcio, Mara Cagol and Alberto Franceschini the Red Brigades became active starting in 1970 and soon became the most notorious armed band in Italy. Following the bombing in Piazza Fontana in 1969, largely believed to have been a 'strage di stato'-a state orchestrated slaughter, many members of the far left started to embrace the idea of an armed struggle to dissolve the social contract 'sciogliere il patto sociale' and to achieve revolution. The name 'Red Brigades' was chosen by Curcio in Piazzale Loreto, the infamous square in Milan where the Nazi and their Fascist accomplices had hanged partisans and where later (1945) the dead bodies of Mussolini and Claretta Petacci were trampled by an angry mob. In their very name choice, the Red Brigades drew links between themselves and the partisan armed bands involved in the Resistance, suggesting that the civil war that had divided the country between 1943 and 1945 was not over.

Following the structural model of the Tupamaros guerrillas from Uruguay, the Red Brigades formed two separate columns active in Turin and Milan. At first they limited themselves to organizing picketing and minor sabotage in the Milan and Turin factories of Pirelli and Fiat; their first kidnappings were merely symbolic, aimed at ridiculing and denouncing moles and power holders from the factory floor. Partially due to the popularity of these initial actions, the Red Brigades soon became a large- scale underground organization active in several different regions whose actions now turned to more explicit violence, with 'knee-cappings', targeted kidnappings and murders. On several occasions the group collaborated with other armed bands and found funds and weapons through ordinary criminality and by organizing bank robberies. Common targets were members of the security services such as the police, prison guards and *carabinieri*, as well as politicians, judges, industrialists, and journalists. Amongst their most infamous actions, the Red Brigades managed, in 1978, to kidnap and kill Aldo Moro, an ex Prime Minister of Italy, head of the Democratic Christian party and ideologue behind 'the historic compromise' between the Democratic Christian Party and the Communist Party.

In 1975 a number of the Red Brigade founders were arrested. These arrested leaders continued their political activity from prison while a younger generation of Red Brigadists took control. By the early 1980s, also due to the crackdown by the security forces and the police, and to the new judicial policy of *pentitismo* and *dissociazione* the cohesion of the group began to be eroded. After the failed kidnapping in 1981 of General James Dozier, an American who held a position with NATO in Italy, in which the general was freed by police forces, most of the group's leaders were arrested. In October 1981 the organization was formally disbanded although since then several other killings have been claimed by groups using the organization's name.

NAP -NUCLEI DI AZIONE PROLETARIA-Nuclei of Proletarian Action

Following the wave of riots that shook Italian prisons starting in 1969 new activists emerged from the prison. Lotta Continua became interested in these prison movements and started a Commission on Prisons in 1970. The group's newspaper had a section called 'the wretched of the earth' dedicated to these groups and to

prison problems. After 1973, when Lotta Continua repudiated the use of illegal measures to achieve social change many members of the Commission on Prisons broke off into groups which would become armed bands and then NAP emerged from one such division by a group from Naples. Their first actions in Milan, Rome and Naples were in support of the prisoner movements. In 1975 the NAP kidnapped the director of office X of the General directorate of prisons, Judge Giuseppe Di Gennaro. The activities of the NAP mostly targeted the prison sector and tried to keep tension high inside prisons. By 1977 following arrests and killings, the NAP merged with the Red Brigades and ceased to exist. A total of 65 people faced trials for the activities of the NAP.

PRIMA LINEA-Front Line.

Prima Linea was founded in 1976. The group emerged from two movements from within Lotta Continua: 'corrente' (current) and 'frazione' (fraction), which had called for 'arming en masse' (armamento di massa). Prima Linea was an umbrella organization formed by the coming together of many smaller groups like the 'comitati comunisti combattenti' (communist fighting committees), 'ronde proletarie tiburtino' (proletarian gangs tiburtino) the 'collettivo studenti operai dei castelli romani' (the collective of worker students of the roman castles) the 'proletari organizzati per il comunismo' (proletarians organized for communism) and 'lotta armata per il comunismo' (armed struggle for communism) etc. The band saw itself as the vanguard of the 'movement of 1977' a year in which social tensions were at their peak. Prima Linea activities, including armed robberies, sabotage, kidnappings, and about fifteen murders, ended in 1981 although the group continued to hold internal meetings (in prison) until 1984.

SAP-SQUADRE ARMATE PROLETARIE-Armed Proletarian Squads

The SAP were the group behind the shooting of the prison doctor Grazio Romano from 'Le Nuove'. The armed band SAP was formed in 1977 with the goal of constituting a proletarian army. It joined Prima Linea in 1978. Due to arrests it ceased to exist in May of 1979. Susanna Ronconi was amongst its leaders.

NAR- NUCLEI ARMATI RIVOLUZIONARI -armed revolutionary nuclei

Led by Giuseppe Valerio Fioravanti, Dario Pedretti, Cristiano Fioravanti, Alessandro Alibrandi, Francesca Mambro. The NAR was a Fascist clandestine organization active in the years between 1978 and 1981. It started by forming small groups, which would organize violent clashes against leftist organizations and small sabotages in neighbourhoods. The NAR Collaborated with organized criminals who would organize robberies for them and reinvest the profits, while using the NAR for intimidation or killings. The leaders of NAR were, among many other crimes, held responsible for the bombing in the train station in Bologna of 2 August 1980 that left 85 people dead and 200 wounded.

Appendix 2

INFORMATION ON INTERVIEWEES

1. Berruto, Giuseppe: Was the national head of A.N.E.D. and a member of the General Assembly of the International Committee of Dachau. He was held in Le Nuove for six months in 1944 before being deported to Dachau, for having been caught distributing subversive pamphlets in his high school Istituto Sommelier. He was the author of several books of memoirs and poetry, based on his recollections of the camps. He often volunteered in 'Le Nuove' for the organization 'Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola' talking about his experience in prison to classes of school children. He passed away suddenly in 2004.
2. Dr. Buffa: Is the director of the new prison 'Le Vallette' and has been authorizing access to those touring Le Nuove. He grew up in a neighbourhood close to 'Le Vallette' and is a criminologist. He heard many stories about the most violent period in 'Le Nuove' but he doesn't believe them, although he quite eagerly showed me the bullet marks and the traces of the old barricades that were in place in the early 1980s to protect 'Le Vallette' from terrorist attacks which occurred on several occasions.
3. Cappelletto, Vincenzo: Started working as a teacher in a prison in Parma in 1961, at the age of 23. In the early 1970s he asked to be transferred to Turin. He taught gardening in Le Nuove until 1986 and then he was transferred, together with the vast majority of prisoners, to Le Vallette where he continued to teach until he was forced to retire in 2003. He is also an astrologer and has also held yearly seminars in astrology inside the prison.
4. Cherchi, Anna: Was held in Le Nuove from the 19th of March to the 26th of June 1944. She had been an active partisan (*partigiana combattente*) in the Langhe, a hilly region about an hour away from Turin. In January 1944 the Germans burned down her house because it was a meeting place for partisans and she had to run away and join the clandestine forces. While she was held in 'Le Nuove' she was continuously taken to the police station in Via Asti, where most of the Fascist interrogations took place, and interrogated, though she was never beaten. In June of 1944 she was deported to Ravensbrück, a concentration camp for women in Germany from which she returned, weighing less than 30 kg, at the end of the war.
5. Chiesa, Carla: Currently works in the non-profit organization 'Gruppo Abele', a group very active towards the rights of drug addicts which also has a relevant section connected to prisons. She was a volunteer with Caritas, the Catholic organization, in Alessandria and volunteered in Le Nuove for five years starting in 1980. She mostly helped handle bureaucratic questions for prisoners close to finishing their sentences.
6. Chindamo, Filomena: Was born in Calabria in 1956 and lived in Bocchigliero, a very small village. As a teen-ager, to kill time and to feel less isolated in her provincial town, she would often write letters to famous

people, in particular to Claudio Baglioni, her favourite pop star. She would find addresses for these letters in a magazine she subscribed to regularly, called 'Confidenza'. One day she found an announcement in the magazine in which a young man who lived in 'Casa Circondariale di Torino' asked people to write him because he was lonely. Filomena didn't know that a 'Casa Circondariale' was a prison and started writing to this man together with some of her girlfriends. They wrote a letter a week. She would send poems, books, dried flowers, pictures of herself and her friends and the inmate she wrote to had a giant portrait of her made from a photograph by another inmate and sent it to her, as well many other small presents including tapes from the Sanremo Music Festival. Filomena soon discovered that her pen pal was in prison for drug-related crimes but it only became a problem when the man she wrote to sent a request to the local carabinieri (military police) to go visit her, claiming that he was her fiancé. Filomena's family heard that a convict had claimed to be her boyfriend and they put an end to the correspondence.

7. Cipolla, Padre Ruggero: served as prison chaplain in 'Le Nuove' from 1944 to 1994. Called in to substitute for two priests who had been 'compromised' for helping out partisans in the prisons, he assisted more than seventy condemned men in the final stages of the Second World War and its immediate aftermath. After the war Padre Ruggero continued his work in the prison, where he held considerable power, running the school and almost all extracurricular activities and even allegedly deciding the transfer of a director he didn't like. He is the author of the books *I miei condannati a morte*, and *Un francescano dietro le sbarre 1944-1994*, which recount through anecdotes, his version of the events he witnessed. He is also the subject of four other books based on his memories.
8. Contini, Riccardo: Taught in 'Le Nuove' from 1977 until 1978. He teaches technical studies at the High school Plana, which has been running courses in Turin prisons since 1952. Following the assassinations of the prison guards Cotugno and Lorusso and after the assassination of Aldo Moro, Riccardo Contini stopped teaching in 'Le Nuove', afraid for his life.
9. Cristofanelli, Filippo: Worked in prison administration starting in 1965 when he was transferred to Turin to become the director of the prison for minors called 'Ferrante Aporti'. In 1970 he started working in an office inside 'Le Nuove' where the District Inspectorate of the Prison was based. After the riots of 1971 his office was moved to a building outside the prison. Today Cristofanelli works for the Centro di Formazione Professionale, an association that aims at providing training and job placement for inmates and ex-inmates.
10. De Salvia, Antonio: was a volunteer in 'Le Nuove' briefly in the late 1970s. He then moved on to do social work and wrote his thesis on prison conditions using data from the prison archives. He currently works with Cristofanelli at the job placement centre for ex-inmates.

11. Farina, Inspector: Came to 'Le Nuove' as a guard in 1964 when he moved from a small village in the South of Italy to the big city of Turin. He moved up in his career first to the rank of marshal and finally to commander, the highest rank a prison guard can attain. He worked in 'Le Nuove' from 1964 until the bulk of the prison was moved to 'Le Vallette' in 1986, then he continued to work in Le Vallette until he retired in 1999. He mainly served in the matriculation office where he had contacts with all incoming prisoners, but he also served shifts in various other parts of the prison.
12. F.R.: Asked to remain anonymous. He was held in 'Le Nuove' for 28 days in 1985 but also served time for brief periods in other prisons such as Genoa and Turin's new prison 'Le Vallette'. He now works in a centre that focuses on the rehabilitation and re-incorporation of drug addicts into society.
13. Gambera, Giuseppe: worked as a prison administrator in 'Le Nuove' starting in 1949, having transferred from Calabria. He was Ragioniere Capo, in charge of accounting. During the period between 1974 and 1980, in which prison directors alternated each other almost every three months, he claims to have effectively served their function. He also claims to have played a key role in the negotiations with inmates in the riots of 1969-1971 and 1976, though this is not always corroborated by other people, or by the newspaper articles reporting on the events. He made friends with the bandit Cavallero and with Renato Curcio, the head of the Red Brigades. In 1982 he received a letter from the ministry of Justice informing him that he was on a list of targets found in a hideout of the Red Brigades but he refused to be transferred and continued his work in Le Nuove until 1987.
14. Wife of Giuseppe Gambera: lived in the prison apartments for officers and prison administrators with her husband and children. She worked as a guard in the female section of the prison and was very close to the nuns and still maintains contacts with many ex prisoners, ex prison workers and nuns.
15. Garizio, Adriana: Served nine years in eleven prisons around Italy, including the 'special' prison for women in Voghera, for her participation in the Red Brigades. Before her arrest she worked as a middle-school teacher in Turin. 'Le Nuove' was the first prison she was taken to but she was transferred very shortly after her arrival in 1977, for having been one of the leaders of a series of protests organized by female inmates on the roof of the building. She has three daughters who were teenagers at the time of her arrest and she was only allowed to see them once a month for several years in which the article 90 was applied to her.
16. Giordano, Carlo: Taught in 'Le Nuove' between 1981 and 1986, mostly courses for professional training financed by the region. He taught electronics and electro mechanics mostly to prisoners with longer sentences.
17. Giovenale, Andreina: daughter of the owner of the Giovenale Factory, which had a workshop in the prison, producing metal scales. The factory withdrew from the prison after the riot of 1969 when rioting inmates destroyed their supplies to the damage of several million lire.

18. G.R.: Asked to remain anonymous. He has been in and out of prison for the past fifteen years (he is currently in semi-libertá) for financial crimes usually involving tax evasion schemes and setting up non-existing international firms. He slept in Le Nuove for several years and currently reports to Le Vallette every night after his day job.
19. Wife of G.R.: Works as a decorator and lives from selling copies of famous paintings, which she makes herself. She has been going to meetings in the prison since her husband's first arrest.
20. Lanza Antonella: Was the mother of policeman Salvatore Lanza who was shot dead by the red Brigades on December 15, 1978. After her son died she and her husband moved into their sons apartment in Turin from Sicily. She and her family had to wait fifteen years before receiving any compensation from the State. On the certificate presented to them in a pompous ceremony ten years after their son's death, the date of his assassination was written incorrectly.
21. Nicolotti, Luca: Works in a bookstore during the day but has to return to 'Le Vallette' at night. He was arrested in 1980 for being a militant in the Red Brigades (involved, amongst other things in the logistical operations of the Aldo Moro kidnappings) but ran away and lived clandestinely for two years. He spent time in many different prisons around Italy, including 'special prisons'. He spent three years in 'Le Nuove' where he was held in the penal section and attended courses in woodworking while also working on his university degree in sociology. He was married in the prison chapel by the prison chaplain Padre Ruggero and has two small children but he was recently denied parole and must continue to be imprisoned in 'semi-libertá'.
22. Parente, Carmelo: Is a retired prison guard who was promoted to the rank of marshal. He was born in Sicily and started working in Le Nuove in 1970, after having been assigned to several other prisons around Italy. He resigned in 1977 because the atmosphere in the prison was unbearable and he went to work as a custodian in a building. Today he is the head of the association for retired prison guards who meet regularly in 'Le Nuove' to play cards. He is also a prolific poet.
23. P.G. asked to remain anonymous. He was held in Le Nuove for a few months in the late 1970s while facing trial before being transferred to the prison in Genoa. He served time in prison for car theft and does not like talking about his experience.
24. Wife of Carmelo Parente: She was ten years younger than Parente and came from the same village in Sicily. She lamented all the moves, first to Palermo, then to Alessandria, Casale Monferrato, Solmona and then Turin. She was a housewife and lived in an apartment inside the prison, she went to mass with the nuns (who were the guards in the women's section) and used some of the prison facilities daily. She also briefly served as a prison guard in the female section.

25. Perla, Aldo: was the defence Lawyers for most of the Red Brigades tried in Turin. He also worked with common prisoners and visited 'Le Nuove' almost every day for thirty years. He still practices law and has been to prisons all over the country to attend his clients' trials.

26. Pistoi, Ennio: was held in 'Le Nuove' for several months during 1944-1945 for his partisan activities. He was responsible, amongst other things, for organizing the mass escape of a group of partisan leaders and English soldiers from military barracks in the centre of Turin but there was never proof that he was behind it. He is the author of *Nonno Ennio Racconta*, a book derived from a series of story-telling sessions with his grandchildren, in which he told them his memories of fascism, of fighting in Russia, and of his efforts in the Resistance. His first child was born while he was in prison and he first held him after he was placed on a tray and sent through the rolling door through which clean laundry was usually delivered. He left 'Le Nuove' when it was liberated on the 25th of April. He is also an active member of 'Nessun Uomo E' Un'isola'.

27. Pistoi, Irma (born Irma Ingaramo): is the wife of Ennio Pistoi and was also involved in partisan activities. She too was arrested but she was released almost immediately because she was eight months pregnant. Her main role in the resistance consisted in forging identification documents and other papers. She and her husband have given me their entire correspondence from the period in which Ennio Pistoi was in prison.

28. Romano, Giovanna: Wife of Teodoro. She worked for a short period as a guard herself in 1974 because it was very convenient since she lived on the premises but she stopped because it was too stressful. She nevertheless remembers many of the demonstrations and some very dramatic moments at 'Le Nuove' from hearing them from her husband, and seeing and hearing them from her window.

29. Romano, Grazio: Worked as the prison doctor in 'Le Nuove' starting in the early 1960s. On February 1, 1979 two young men were waiting for him outside of his private clinic and shot him several times. He still has a bullet lodged in his pelvic bone and one in his leg. The shooting was claimed by the "squadre armate proletarie" as part of their attack campaign on prisons.

30. Romano, Teodoro: Was born near Campobasso in 1935 and was transferred to Turin in 1967. He mostly served in the warehouse, organizing clothing and other equipment, attended by three labouring inmates. He and his family lived in the prison but after the assassinations and tensions in the prison he quit his job in 1979 and went to work in an office.

31. Ronconi, Susanna: Currently works as a consultant in a drug rehabilitation organization. She was taken to Le Nuove briefly in 1980 to attend a trial and then she was transferred there more definitely again in 1984. In January 1982 she was helped to escape from the prison in Rovigo by her partner but was recaptured a few months later. She and her partner were both held in 'Le

Nuove' for their involvement in the organization 'Prima Linea' (they were leaders of the SAP- squadre Armate Proletarie a group which joined Prima Linea in 1978). In 1987 she and her partner obtained 'semiliberta' and then they finished serving their sentence in 1993. She and some of her girlfriends from the prison participated in an oral history project with Luisa Passerini and Nicola Tranfaglia and she and her companions are currently working on their own project on their memories.

32. Salmoira, Mauro: served time for participating in the Red Brigades. He was held in various 'special' prisons around Italy and only about two months in Le Nuove during the first trial of the Red Brigades in 1976.
33. Scala, Marisa: was a 'staffetta partigiana' (a go-between between the central command and the partisan troops in the mountains) and was arrested and taken to 'Le Nuove' a first time in 1943. Her brother and cousin were both partisans as well. After a period of about a month during which she was interrogated, she was freed on parole, on condition that she report to the German command every day and that she not leave the city. After a group of rowdy Fascists came to her house in the middle of the night she decided to join the resistance more permanently and go into hiding. She continued to work as a go-between and to handle money, explosives and false documents for the resistance until she was re-arrested again in early 1944. A few weeks after her arrest the Germans had prepared to deport her together with other partisan and Jewish prisoners and she miraculously managed to escape. She was recaptured a month later and sent to Ravensbrück.
34. Seven, Renata: A schoolteacher who used to live just a few blocks from the prison. I met her when she brought her little boy to one of the guided tours of the prison. She remembers seeing prisoners communicating with family members through the bars of the prison windows in a form of sign language. She also remembers having to take long detours or having to identify herself at road blocks full of armed men at the time of the Red Brigade Trials in the late 1970s.
35. Simioni, Bruno: Is a member of A.N.E.D. the National Association of Ex Political Deportees He was a partisan in the Col Del Lys brigades and was deported to Dachau in 1944. Before being deported he was held in le Nuove for a month before being transferred to San Vittore in Milan. While in Le Nuove he was repeatedly interrogated and beaten and he was kept in total isolation although he got messages from the people who were allowed to have meetings with their relatives, through small pieces of paper brought to him by inmate workers who were the people in charge of bringing him food. When he came back from the camps he discovered that his father had been executed.
36. Spatafora, Salvatore: Is a retired prison guard from Calabria, who started working in Le Nuove in 1968. Before that he worked in the prison of Pianosa for four years after having worked in a chemical plant in Germany for four years. He served three years in various sections of 'Le Nuove' and was then sent to the matriculation office where he worked until 1978 when he received

a threatening letter from the Red Brigades and was transferred to work in the prison administration outside of Turin. He was in charge of weapon distribution and he also coordinated the ballistic trainings for guards. In 1993 he was assigned to run the secretarial part of the trials against prison guards as well as their appeals and he retired in 1998.

37. Surace, Giuseppe: was director of 'Le Nuove' from 1983 to 1986 and is credited for bringing order to the prison. He was the first director to stay in 'Le Nuove' for a relatively long period of time and he enforced some of the stricter policies used to avoid conflict inside prisons: he isolated terrorists and other violent elements into a separate wing and applied the article 90 to them, effectively making their section into a 'special' prison. He personally read the internal correspondence of terrorists such as Susanna Ronconi and was very active in promoting 'dissociazione' and 'pentitismo' by dramatically improving the conditions for those who chose to renounce their violent past.
38. Tagliente, Felice: Was the psychologist in Le Nuove starting in the late 1970s and still works in the prison 'Le Vallette'. He is also a history professor at the Technical high school Maiorana in Turin and is one of the founding members of the organization 'Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola' whose main aim is the preservation of 'Le Nuove' as an historic site. He and his wife run the organized tours of Le Nuove and are the main authority people have to refer to if they want to visit the building.
39. Toppino, Angelo: is the current prison librarian in 'Le Vallette'. He was one of the founding members of Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola and is an expert on Turin's early carceral institutions and on Giulia di Barolo, a noble woman who pushed forth reforms of the female prison in Turin in the early 19th century.
40. Toscano, Orazio: Was born in 1936, the son of a Valdesse Communist man and a Catholic woman. His father, Diego Toscano, worked at FIAT but he was arrested in 1941 for 'subversive activity' because he was a registered communist and was active in the 'Soccorso Rosso' an organization aimed at supporting the families of people in prison for political activity. Diego Toscano served two years in the prison of Castelfranco Emilia while his wife and child had to sell all of their furniture to stay alive. They were lucky enough to have a kind landlord who didn't ask them to pay rent. After Diego Toscano got out he continued his communist political activity, distributing fliers in factories, and after the Fascists came to his house to arrest him in the summer of 1943, he escaped, took to the mountains around Torre Pellice and joined the armed resistance. He was arrested again in March of 1944 and taken to Le Nuove where he stayed until he was transferred to the assembly camp at Fossoli in May of 1944 and then deported in June to Mauthausen where he died on January 27, 1945. His wife and son only found out about his death in 1968. During the immediate war years they looked for him among all the people returning from the concentration camps and eventually his wife developed extreme paranoid delusions in which she was convinced that the Fascists were outside of her house and wanted to kill her and her son, so she would keep her son locked up for days at a time. She was taken to a mental

hospital and her son was left completely alone to fend for himself for almost three years. He then went on to work at FIAT and was very active in the communist union. He has been an active member of the organization 'Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola' since 2000.

41. Valer, Paolo: Is a high-ranking police officer in the Prefecture of Turin. He was a young policeman at the time of the prison riots of 1976 and went into Le Nuove together with some of his colleagues to quell the rebellion. For a few months in 1978 he worked on the morning shift patrolling the area surrounding Le Nuove and he shared a room in the police barracks with Salvatore Porceddu who was one of two of his colleagues on the patrol shift to be assassinated during duty, machine-gunned by the Red Brigades on December 15, 1978.
42. Viglino, Giovanna: Started working as a volunteer in Le Nuove in 1982. She had been working on the outside for a religious organization called ONARMO, an organization sponsored by the United States and the Vatican to provide 'moral and religious assistance to workers'. In ONARMO she handled paperwork for poor families and when she got to 'Le Nuove' she worked on sorting out paperwork for prisoners and helping them with all sorts of bureaucracy. She still volunteers in Le Vallette with the religious association S. Vincenzo.
43. Zanini, Giorgio: is a chemical technician at the University of Turin and an active leftist. In the 1950s he was a factory worker and was one of the organizers of an early strike at Fiat. At that time he was asked to write an article for the first issue of the 'Quaderni Rossi' a radical leftist publication emerging primarily from the militant ranks of the Socialist party. In 1968 he was at a demonstration in the centre of Turin in which there was a violent confrontation between protesters and the police (in which he was not involved). He was on his way home when he was stopped by a group of policemen who started beating him in the street and then took him to a police station where they continued to beat him until he was bleeding so much in the face that he had to be taken to the hospital to get stitches. When he got back they beat him more and he lost consciousness and finally they took him to 'Le Nuove' where he spent fifteen days. During his trial he was proved innocent of all charges except for 'oltraggio'-disrespecting a police officer- but his appeals trial was never held because an amnesty was set in place for all similar crimes from the 1968 period.

Appendix 3

LAW CODES AND PRISON REFORMS

1863 Prison Code regulating ideal procedures for prison conduct in new Italian State.

1890- Zanardelli Code for the Kingdom of Italy. Abolished the death penalty, which was reintroduced during the Fascist Period.

1926-A new law of public security was passed introducing 'confino'-the practice of sending dissidents to remote parts of the Italian peninsula and on small islands.

1930- Rocco Penal Code- parts of it are still applied today, for example 'article 270' which establishes 'subversive association' as a political crime. The Rocco code militarised the corps of the prison guards and made them subject to extremely strict rules of discipline and timetables.

1931-New rules were established for the running of prisons, which also heavily sanctioned prisoner behaviour. In the same year a law was passed granting immunity for guards committing crimes inside the prison.

1934-Establishment of a separate Tribunal for Minors.

1945- Large-scale prison riots, connected to poor conditions inside prisons, to insufficient food, and to a failure to reform the Rocco Penal Code. The Riot at 'Le Nuove' ended in violence, with three prisoners dead.

1947- Amnesty given for crimes committed during fascism. The death penalty was abolished once again.

1950- a new norm was applied in which inmates had their haircut and the matriculation number was used in place of the inmate's name.

1969- Prisoners in 'Le Nuove' started a wave of prison riots that spread to the rest of the country. Riots were mostly aimed at protesting against the dreadful prison conditions and the failure to reform the Fascist regulations still used in prison. All the protesting prisoners were transferred to high security prisons and prison psychiatric hospitals as retaliation after the riots.

1975- Prison Reform: abolished the Fascist code. It was aimed at improving prison conditions and required prison guards to be active in the 'redemption' of prisoners. Guards were not given more training nor were their numbers or pay increased, so this reform created large discontent within the prisons. Extracurricular activities, work and schooling were supposed to be incorporated into the daily workings of prison life but facilities, resources and personnel were largely insufficient to run such programs. Prisoners grew disappointed and frustrated at the slowness with which the reforms were applied and this led to violent and non-violent protests, which occurred at regular intervals from 1976 well into the early 1980s.

1977-1980-Cossiga laws, increased punishment for terrorist related crimes, and encouraged the phenomenon of 'dissociazione' and 'pentitismo' in which those who would tell on their fellow terrorists or mafia members and renounce criminal values would have their sentences reduced.

Legge Reale: gave police extraordinary powers (especially concerning their use of firearms and their rights to detain suspects for 48 hours without pressing charges).

1974, decreto legge n.99 11/4/1974 allowed for preventive incarceration to be extended to up to eight years based simply on suspicion of planning terrorist activity.

1977- 'Special prisons' were established for political prisoners and the most violent and organized ordinary prisoners, usually involved in mafia-type activities. These 'special prisons' were placed in re-opened island prisons used during 'confinio' and 13 new prisons were built between 1977 and 1981, three of which served women. In these special prisons visits with relatives were held in rooms with high glasses where inmates and family members would have to communicate through a speakerphone. The 'article 90' was applied very heavily in these prisons and prisoners were denied access to newspapers, to mail, to food from outside, work, phone calls and had reduced visits with their relatives.

'article 90'(articolo 90), which applied to prisoners considered particularly dangerous and in prison for crimes relating to the mafia and to terrorism. It included the interruption of all internal mail, the censoring of external mail, the exemption from all cultural, sport and recreational activities, the interruption of phone communications, of the clothing and food packages and a considerable reduction in visits with loved ones.

1986 -'Gozzini' law passed. The reform aimed at expanding the opportunities for inmates to get re-introduced into society. It allowed for inmates to work outside and have time with relatives and friends if they respected the rules and regulations of the prison. This reform also made it easier for volunteers to work inside the prison and increased the power and presence of psychologists and social workers within the prison. It was based on a system of exchange by which privileges were granted to inmates based on good behaviour, which was established through increased observation.

1990-the corps of the prison guards is demilitarised and guards are allowed to unionise.

1997- Simeoni law, passed in response to media campaigns complaining that the Italian prison system was too permissive. It placed greater importance on police reports as opposed to the recommendations of social workers, in the decisions on applying alternative forms of punishment to individual offenders.

PRIMARY SOURCES

INTERVIEWS

Interviews took place on various visits to Turin between August 2002 and May 2004. Further information on interviewees may be found in Appendix 2.

The following interviews were conducted in the informant's home:

1. Adriana Garizio.
2. Angelo Toppino.
3. Anna Cherchi.
4. Antonella Lanza.
5. Carmelo Parente.
6. Ennio Pistoì.
7. Filomena Chindamo.
8. Giorgio Zanini.
9. Giovanna Romano.
10. Giovanna Viglino.
11. Giuseppe Gambera.
12. Irma Pistoì.
13. Marisa Scala.
14. Mauro Salmoira.
15. Padre Ruggero Cipolla.
16. Salvatore Spatafora.
17. Susanna Ronconi.
18. Teodoro Romano.
19. Vincenzo Cappelletto.
20. Wife of Carmelo Parente.

The following interviews were conducted at the informant's office:

21. Aldo Perla.
22. Antonietta Passarelli.
23. Antonio De Salvia.
24. Carla Chiesa.
25. Carlo Giordano.
26. Filippo Cristofanelli.
27. Grazio Romano.
28. Paolo Valer.
29. Pietro Buffa.
30. Riccardo Contini.

The following interview was conducted in the reception hall of ANED in Rivoli:

31. Giuseppe Berruto.

The following interviews were conducted at Le Nuove prison:

32. Felice Tagliente.
33. Marisa Scala I.
34. Orazio Toscano.
35. Seven Renata.

The following interviews were conducted in a public bar or restaurant chosen by my informants in Turin:

- 36. Farina.
- 37. G.R.
- 38. G.R.'s Wife
- 39. Luca Nicolotti.
- 40. F.R.
- 41. Orazio Toscano II
- 42. P.G.

The following interviews were conducted on the telephone:

- 43. Andreina Giovenale.
- 44. Bruno Simioni.
- 45. Giuseppe Surace.

ARCHIVES

From the Archivio di Stato di Torino. Fondo Casa Circondariale di Torino detta 'Le Nuove' (Turin State Archive. Le Nuove prison collection):

Box 2355. Registro di grande sorveglianza.

Box 3452. Folder 1. Registro Rapporti Diversi Detenuti.

Box 784-785. Registro Rapporti Agenti.

Box 6561. Atti vari per il direttore, 7 May 1980 entry, requesting removal of prison guard.

Box 4977-4978. Documentazione varia da inserire nei fascicoli 1979. Letter from N.V. to M.R., 12 September 1979.

Box 7306.

Box 7343. Registro Rapporti Agenti 1978. letter from the Inspector General to the General Directorate of the Ministry of Justice from 27 January, 1966.

Box 784. Rapporti guardie 1946.

Box 4157. Registro rapporti contro gli agenti, file dated 5 October 1979.

Box 6673.

Box 303. Registro perquisizioni celle 1948-1949.

Box 3452. Folder 1. Registro Rapporti Disciplinari Detenuti 3 June 1976.

Box 6503. Registro Rapporti diversi agenti. Letter dated 16 March 1979.

Box 4018. Domandine detenuti 1956-1979.

Box 229. Atti vari per il maresciallo comandante. Letter of the 22 January 1979 to the Commander of the Turin Judiciary Guards.

*Archivio di Padre Ruggero Cipolla, Convento S. Bernardino da Siena, Saluzzo
(Padre Ruggero Cipolla Archive, Convent of S. Bernardino da Siena, Saluzzo):*

Box 38

Box 39

Founding pamphlet of the Comitato Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola produced in 2001.

Suor Giuseppina de Muro, *Relazione a sua eminenza reverendissima il cardinale Maurilio Fossati sulla attività svolta nelle carceri giudiziarie di Torino dalle figlie della carità*, Turin, 22 February, 1946. From the archive of Padre Ruggero Cipolla, Convento di S. Bernardino da Siena, Saluzzo.

Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola. Dal carcere al Martinetto. Un percorso espositivo sulla condizione carceraria rivissuta attraverso gli internati della Repubblica Sociale Italiana. Carcere Giudiziario 'Le Nuove' Torino, Sponsored by Albe Steiner Torino, I.T.I.S. 'E. Majorana' Grugliasco, Nessun Uomo E' Un'Isola, Città di Torino, Provincia di Torino, Regione Piemonte, Grafica Nizza, Collegno (TO), 2001.

Dalle Nuove issues from 1956 to 1980.

Diari e Cronache 1945-1986.

Super-8 Footage of football games and wedding ceremonies.

Photographs in various folders.

NEWSPAPERS

La Repubblica:

Carlo Mosca, 'Pianeta-Carcere Laboratorio di Nuovi Delitti' in *La Repubblica* (date missing).

Gad Lerner, "Noi portavoce della periferia esclusa"-viaggio al centro della rabbia. A Torino, una notte nei centri sociali: anarchia, musica e poi le incursioni in cerca di nemici', *La Repubblica*, 2 April 1998.

Giorgio Bocca, 'Il ritorno della violenza', *La Repubblica*, 3 April 1998.

Carlo Chianura, 'Non sono come le BR ma quella violenza...', *La Repubblica*, 5 April 1998.

Sarah Strippoli, 'Suor Giuseppina che salvò un bambino alle Nuove', *La Repubblica*, 23 March 2002.

Gino Li Veli, 'Le Nuove recuperate diventeranno uffici' in *La Repubblica*, 1 Aprile 2003.

Il Corriere della Sera

P.V. 'Giornalisti aggrediti ai funerali dello squatter suicida. Un reporter locale e collaboratore dell'Ansa ferito in modo serio da una decina di anarchici che lo hanno pestato a pugni e calci anche quando era a terra', *Il Corriere della Sera*, 1 April 1998.

D. Mart, 'Il governo cerca di stemperare la tensione in vista della manifestazione prevista per domani pomeriggio a Torino. Napolitano: non vieto il corte. Scontri a Bologna', *Il Corriere della Sera*, 3 April 1998.

Luigi Offeddu wrote: 'La Città ha vissuto una giornata da incubo e si é risvegliata solamente quando la manifestazione é terminata. Torino blindata, la grande paura é passata. Negozi chiusi, la gente barricata in casa. Napolitano: nulla di drammatico. Radio Black Out: giornata tranquilla e pacifica come volevamo che fosse', *Il Corriere della Sera*, 5 April 2005.

Other:

'Lo stato d'assedio', *Internazionale Situazionista*, n.1, Milan, 1969.

'Reportage dalle Carceri Italiane' from *La Domenica del Corriere*, n.6-10 and 7-17 February 1974.

Luigi Vismara, 'Inchiesta sul sistema penitenziario italiano. Prigioni: manca tutto, anche il senso di colpa', *Il Giorno*, 2 July 1976.

'Ma alle guardie chi ci pensa?', *Il Giorno*, d.m. August 1976.

'Cento detenuti sui tetti delle Nuove solidarizzano col sardo che protesta' in *L'Unità*, 21 August 1976.

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